

An Analysis of the Independent Trade Unions

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in South Africa in the 1970s

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by

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## Abstract

The thesis is an historical and sociological study of the independent trade unions in South Africa in the 1970s. Several research methods were used: participant and non-participant observation, primary and secondary source material, structured and open-ended interviews. In addition, earlier drafts were shown to the unions for correction of factual errors and clarification of issues.

The findings of the thesis are as follows: historically, the independent unions went through two stages in the 1970s. During the first stage they struggled for survival against capital and the state, which opposed their very existence. At the end of 1976 their future hung in the balance because of political turmoil, economic recession and state repression. But they survived and in the second stage they fought to gain formal recognition at a limited number of companies.

Sociologically, the thesis focusses on two major themes: the efforts of the independent unions to be democratic organisations and their strategies to acquire power. A central finding is that the independent unions strove to build up their strength by organising democratically at the work place. Certain strategies in organising and tactics in industrial disputes were more successful than others in helping the unions build up their strength.

The unions went through a democratisation process that entailed three phases: the creation of democratic structures in the unions, developing workers' capacities to take control of the structures, and the emergence of representative and accountable worker leadership. While this process had not been completed by the end of the period under consideration, the strong influence

initially exercised by intellectual leaders was reduced considerably.

The empirical findings of the thesis are used to evaluate the appropriateness of relevant sociological theories of trade unions and related issues. They are frequently found to be inappropriate, being based on conditions very different from those that faced the independent unions.

Finally, it is concluded that the democratic form of organisation adopted by the independent unions in the 1970s had a definite political significance which started emerging in the 1980s.

## Part 1

### Theory and Background

#### Introduction to Thesis

This thesis is a sociological and historical study of independent trade unions in South Africa during the 1970s. The term 'independent' refers to the unions' strenuous efforts to be free from control by outside parties, particularly the state and management, in order to determine their own form of organisation, policies and strategies. They also avoided domination by parental unions which had lent a hand in founding a few of the independent unions. Virtually all the members of the independent unions considered in the thesis were African workers except for a small proportion of Coloured and Indian workers organised by a few of the unions.

Not all the independent unions that existed in South Africa during the 1970s are examined in the thesis. The ones that are examined have in common that they were all founded in the early seventies and that they initially organised only African workers. Furthermore, only unions that were operating in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging, Cape Town, and the Durban-Pietermaritzburg metropolitan regions are included in the study. The one other major industrial region where an African independent union was also founded in the early 1970s, Port Elizabeth, is not incorporated in this study. (1)

The unions thus considered in the thesis are the following groupings: most of the unions affiliated to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), all but one of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions which, with one exception, became the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) in

1980, and the Western Province General Workers' Union. Noteworthy other unions also founded in the early 1970s that organised exclusively African workers which are not included in the thesis are the Black Consciousness-oriented Black and Allied Workers Union (BAWU) and the Port Elizabeth branch of the United Automobile Rubber and Allied Workers' Union (UAW), an affiliate of FOSATU. The Pretoria branch of the UAW is however examined and BAWU hardly made any headway in the 1970s until it split and one section reconstituted itself in 1979 as the non-racial South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU). (2) The highly significant National Union of Mineworkers is also not examined because it was only founded in 1982. Thus all the major independent unions which emerged in the early 1970s are included in this study.

The historical aspects which the thesis examines are the origins, organisational strategies, work place struggles, growth and development of the independent unions from around 1971 up to 1979, the year in which most of the field work for the thesis was conducted. It also traces how the individual unions almost imperceptibly moulded themselves into a trade union movement. The sociological themes which the thesis concentrates on are the strategies to acquire power adopted by the unions, the efforts on the part of the unions to establish internal democracy, as well as the role of intellectual leaders in the unions with regards to both these aims. It is thus an organisational study of trade unions.

In order to specify the boundaries of the thesis more clearly it is useful to state what it does not deal with. It is firstly not a study of the economic effects of the independent trade unions in the 1970s. It therefore does not examine, other

than in a few individual instances, whether the independent unions had any influence on raising the wages of Black workers or not. The reason why this question was not examined is because the central focus of the thesis is the struggle of the independent trade unions to survive and create strong democratic organisations in the face of a hostile management and state in the 1970s. The effect that the independent unions had upon wages, especially in the 1980s when they grew rapidly in size and strength, would have required a different focal point.

The thesis is also not an in-depth study of the Black working class members of the independent unions. Other than some broad and general descriptions of the social and economic characteristics of the African working class in the 1970s, as well as drawing on the findings of two surveys of African workers done in the mid-1970s, the thesis does not focus on the working class as such. (3) While it would certainly have been greatly enriched by a study of the culture, class consciousness and political ideology of the African working class such an enterprise fell beyond the scope of this thesis. Nor does the thesis focus specifically on gender issues with regards to trade union organisation. It does not distinguish between organisational problems which unions encountered in organising women as opposed to men. This issue did not however arise in many of the unions since the overwhelming proportion of African workers in the industries which they were organising were men.

The thesis is divided into five Parts. In Part One the groundwork is laid for a study of the independent unions in the 1970s. Chapter 1 commences with a study of theories of trade unions. It addresses questions such as the objectives of trade unions, what is trade union democracy, who are intellectual leaders and what role do they play in the trade union movement.

Chapter 2 provides a picture of the political economy in which the independent unions emerged in the early 1970s. It considers the prior history of African trade unions in South Africa and reasons for their failures, as well as the structural changes of the South African economy in the 1960s and economic cycles in the 1970s. It also examines the role the state played in subordinating the Black working class including the industrial relations system in South Africa and the changes it underwent during the 1970s.

Parts Two to Four consist of detailed historical studies of the independent union groupings on a regional basis, namely in Natal, Transvaal and the Western Cape. While the sociological themes of the thesis have been borne in mind in the historical exposition of the unions, the study concentrates on the rhythm of the struggles of the different union groupings. Their origins and initial objectives, their struggle for survival against implacable opposition from capital and the state, their advance and retreat as the balance of class forces changed due to economic fluctuations and as the deep-seated anger of Black youth ruptured the surface calm of the system in 1976, and their painstaking reconstruction afterwards, are all presented in considerable detail.

The empirical details of the preceding three Parts and the theories considered in Part One provide Part Five with the material for a synthesis of the history of the independent unions in the 1970s and of the theory and themes considered throughout the thesis. Thus Part Five compares and evaluates the strategies for power adopted by the different union groupings and the common experience of the unions in trying to build up union strength and internal democracy at the same time. It furthermore

analysis the broadly similar processes the unions went through in trying to establish internal union democracy and investigates the contradictory role of intellectual leaders with regards to the unions' aims of being internally democratic and building up their strength simultaneously.

The last chapter rounds off the thesis by considering the ways in which the empirical findings confirm, modify and challenge the theories rehearsed in chapter one of the thesis.

Finally, the political significance of the independent trade union movement in the 1970s is considered. It is argued that, while it may appear that the unions were avoiding politics during that period, their activities were actually of great political significance. Far from being apolitical the independent unions were laying the foundations which, in the long run, could potentially play a key role in the transfer of political power and the transformation of the social relations of production in South Africa.

#### Notes on Terminology

Because the thesis is an organisational study of trade unions it is important to define at the outset what meanings are attached to the word 'organisation' throughout the thesis. When referring to trade unions as organisations the commonly accepted sociological meaning of the word is implied. This has been defined by Bittner as 'stable associations of persons engaged in concerted activities directed to the attainment of specific objectives'. (4) More recently Donaldson has similarly defined organisations as 'any social system which comprises the coordinated action of two or more people towards attaining an objective'. (5) Salaman has added to this the concepts of order and structure 'to describe the regular, patterned nature of

organisational activities and processes'. (6)

When referring to organisation as an activity of the unions the meaning given to the word by trade unionists themselves is usually implied. It is derived from their activity of organising workers in the union. To organise workers entailed some or all of the following activities on the part of union organisers: visiting workers at their work place, holding frequent meetings with their shopfloor representatives and more occasional meetings with the general members of the plant. Usually such meetings would be held at the union offices, but they could also be held in the townships. By organisation in this context is thus meant creating an awareness of the union and its broad objectives amongst union members as well as a commitment on their part to attaining specific goals which they usually decided on collectively with the union organisers.

The terminology used to denote the different social actors in the unions also generally follows the terms used by the unions themselves. The term office-bearer is usually used for worker representatives who themselves work on the shopfloor and are representatives at a higher level than shop stewards. Union officials on the other hand are staff employed by the unions in organising, coordinating and administrative capacities. For instance, union organisers, general secretaries and regional secretaries all fall under this category.

The juridico-political division by the South African state of the country's citizens into distinct population groups based on colour and culture makes it necessary to develop a suitable terminology. Throughout the thesis I shall refer to the four groups as the African, Coloured, Indian and White groups and use the term Blacks to refer collectively to Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Although the term Coloured, rather than 'Coloured' or

so-called Coloured, is used throughout the text to reflect the reality of this political division, it in no ways implies condonation or acceptance of an essentially racist division of the country's citizens into distinct population groups. Occasionally the term Blacks is used to refer only to Africans. This is usually done when quoting from official or other sources that defined the term in such a way.

## Chapter 1

### Theories of Trade Unions

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to consider some theories of trade unions concentrating on the question of trade union objectives and what trade unions need in order to attain their objectives. In the first section of the chapter Marxist and liberal pluralist approaches to the question of trade union objectives are first considered. Since there is not only one approach to this question that can be characterised as Marxist, three distinct theories falling within this approach are put forward. Thereupon I derive and explain my own position on the question.

The subsequent sections of this chapter consist of an examination of three of the requirements of trade unions which were identified in the first section as being necessary if they are to attain their fundamental objective. Considerable attention is paid to defining and deriving a theory of trade union democracy. The concept of intellectuals and the role of intellectual leaders in unions are also considered and the chapter touches briefly on the neglected topic of trade union strategies for building up their strength.

## 1. Theories of Trade Unions

Numerous sociological approaches to the study of trade unions exist. One of the most comprehensive classification of sociological writing on trade unions and industrial relations has been done by Michael Poole. (1) Amongst the major approaches he identifies are Marx's historical materialism, Parson's system theory, Durkheim's theory of values and division of labour and Weber's action analysis. Trade union theorists were however not always consciously following one or other sociological school in their writing. However, their values, ideology and framework often make it possible to classify them within one or other of these sociological traditions.

In this section I examine theories of trade unions propounded by Marxist and liberal pluralist schools of thought. This restriction of theories to the Marxist and liberal pluralist schools is done in order to place some limit on the wide range of possible theoretical avenues that could be explored and because the two theories appeared to be the most relevant for an analysis of the independent trade unions.

An immediate fact that faces one when attempting to do an analysis of Marxist theory on trade unionism is that there are different Marxist tendencies with different approaches towards trade unions. I shall first consider what I call a Marxist-Leninist theory, then a contemporary British Marxist theory espoused by Richard Hyman, and finally Rob Lambert's theory of political unionism.

### 1.1 Marxist-Leninist Political Objectives

One of the central themes from the writing of Marx, Engels and Lenin on trade unions was the political objective of trade unions. The following exposition of their theoretical position

on trade unions is an interpretation that had considerable influence. It does not include all the qualifications and alternative interpretations which could possibly be placed on their writing.

Both Marx and Engels at first considered trade unions to be defensive organisations. They saw trade unions as combinations of workers formed in the first place to eliminate competition among the workers and resist the tendency of capitalists to reduce wages. But in their defensive struggle the workers soon became aware that they were fighting as a class against a united capitalist class whereupon their struggle became a political struggle. In the 1840s, Marx and Engels implied that trade unions themselves were to be the instruments for the overthrow of capitalism. (2)

Twenty years later, in the 1860s, Marx and Engels had crystallized their views on the goals and limitations of trade unions more clearly. Trade unions still had as their aim the emancipation of the working class. Marx was the author of a resolution at the International Workingmen's Association on Trade Unions in 1866 which stated that trade unions had to support every social and political movement directed towards the aim of the complete emancipation of the working class. (3)

But Marx had also come to the conclusion that the day-to-day struggles by trade unions over wages and working conditions had severe limitations:

the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, nor curing the malady...

Trades unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They

fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wage system. (4)

Marx pointed out the need for a working class political party which would unite with the economic struggles of trade unions in their drive for political power. His resolution adopted at the 1871 London Conference of the International Workingmen's Association (the First International) stated that the working class could not act as a class against the collective power of the propertied classes 'except by constituting itself into a political party'. Furthermore,

... the combination of forces which the working class has already affected by its economic struggles ought at the same time to serve as a lever for its struggles against the political power of landlords and capitalists... (5)

Marx thus committed the First International to a position in which the economic movement of the working class and its political action were 'indissolubly united'. (6)

The relationship between trade unions and a political party was spelled out more explicitly in this interpretation of trade union goals by Lenin in 1902. This he did in What is to be Done? although it has to be borne in mind that Lenin was engaged in an internal controversy within the Russian Social-Democratic Party and that he was concerned with the status of unions within Czarist Russia at the turn of the century. (7)

Lenin contended that 'economic (factory) exposures were and remain an important lever in the economic struggle', but that 'the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness' which only leads to trade union organisation and reforms in labour legislation. (8) In order to develop a revolutionary socialist ('Social-Democratic')

consciousness intellectuals drawn from 'educated representatives of the propertied classes' must actively take up the political education of the working class. It is however not enough to explain to the workers that they are politically oppressed. Agitation must be conducted with regard to every concrete example of oppression. (9) Lenin attacked Economism in Social-Democratic politics by maintaining that Martynov's phrase 'lending the economic struggle itself a political character' meant nothing more than the struggle for economic reforms. He dismissed it as 'trade union politics'. 'Revolutionary Social-Democracy' on the other hand, subordinated 'the struggle for reforms ... to the revolutionary struggle for freedom and for socialism'. (10)

It would be wrong to perceive this as Lenin's final and only position on trade unions: Hyman has pointed out that both Lenin's earlier and later writings give considerable emphasis to the potential of trade union struggle in raising worker consciousness. (11)

A more contemporary British view of the goal and role of trade unions in this Marxist-Leninist tradition has been provided by Perry Anderson. Writing in 1967, he had the advantage of viewing the performance of trade unions over a longer historical period. Like his predecessors, Anderson had no doubt that trade unions should play a part in the socialist movement, but stressed their structural limitations as vehicles for advancing towards socialism. He enumerated five of these limitations 'inherent in the nature of trade unions as such'. (12)

1. Trade unions are an essential part of a capitalist society because they embody the difference between capital and labour which defines capitalist society.

As institutions, trade unions do not challenge the

existence of society based on a division of classes, they merely express it. Thus trade unions can never be viable vehicles of advance towards socialism in themselves; by their very nature they are tied to capitalism. (13)

Anderson does recognise though that 'trade unions are dialectically both an opposition to capitalism and a component of it'. (14)

2. Trade unions simply reflect the organisation of the working class at its workplace in a passive way whereas a socialist political party cuts across traditional class alliances in society.

Trade unions ... are a passive reflection of the organization of the work-force. By contrast, a political party is a rupture with the natural environment of civil society... (15)

3. The maximum weapon of trade unions, the strike, which is a withdrawal of labour, is by nature very limited. It can win wage increases and improvement in working conditions, even some constitutional rights, but it can never overthrow a social regime.

As a political weapon, strikes are nearly always profoundly ineffectual... The reason is that socialism requires a conquest of power, which is an input of action, an aggressive over-participation in the system, which abolishes it and creates a new social order... The strike is essentially an economic weapon, which easily boomerangs if used on terrain for which it is not designed. (16)

4. Trade unions by themselves produce only a 'corporate consciousness' because they represent only the working class with a certain cultural-political bias. On the other hand

A revolutionary movement - a party - requires more than this: it must include intellectuals and petit bourgeois who can alone provide the essential **theory** of socialism. Trade unions represent too limited a sociological base for a socialist movement. (17)

5. Trade unions have control over only a single strategic weapon, the control of labour power, whereas a political party has a multiplicity of strategies at its disposal.

The unions' basic sanction is their control of labour power, and this is a singularly rigid and limited weapon. Indeed, a Marxist political party can be seen as precisely an attempt to create, by contrast, a polyvalent potential of revolutionary action, which can be crystallized swiftly and interchangeably in a number of different fields - elections, demonstrations, boycotts, agitation, political education, insurrections, etc. (18)

Anderson also considered three strategies adopted by trade unions to advance workers' struggles, namely encroaching control, occupation of factories, and the general strike. Encroaching control is the strategy of partial advances on the shopfloor, each one wresting successive local prerogatives from management'. Although he viewed this as the most realistic political strategy of trade unions, Anderson was of the opinion that

The balance of power in any capitalist enterprise is so unequal that - without collateral intervention by party or State - no union can hope to wrest major management prerogatives from the employers. (19)

Similarly, Anderson was pessimistic of the potential of factory occupation because workers could not operate the plant which would allow them to take it over. Likewise he did not hold out much hope for a general strike either:

But pure reliance on the General Strike has nearly always been doomed to failure. The fundamental reason is evident: a stoppage, on however massive a scale, is not the same thing as a substitution of one social order for another. (20)

Thus Anderson's analysis of the limitations of trade unions' political potential was based on two pillars: that trade unions face structural limitations, and that they have only one weapon - the power of withdrawal of labour.

Contrary to his line of argument, Anderson pointed out that a reversal of roles had developed between unions and parties in Britain and, to some extent, Western Europe. The trade unions had become the avant-garde in the struggle of the working class

and eclipsed the political parties in the drive for socialism. This was because a revolutionary political party was an unnatural superstructure that was not produced and reproduced automatically by social conditions. It could thus be assimilated into the society. Trade unions, on the other hand, were rooted in the natural organisation of capitalism - the labour market.

The result is that trade unions are less easily chloroformed and suppressed totally than political parties, because they arise spontaneously out of the groundwork of the economic system. (21)

Anderson does not resolve the contradiction between his theoretical analysis on the one hand and the historical developments in Western Europe on the other hand. For his final verdict on the political role of trade unions he falls back on his theoretical interpretation:

Trade unions thus everywhere produce working-class consciousness - that is, awareness of the separate identity of the proletariat as a social force, with its own corporate interest in society. This is not the same thing as socialist consciousness - the hegemonic vision and will to create a new social order, which only a revolutionary party can create. But the one is a necessary stage towards the other. (22)

### Criticism of Marxist-Leninist Theory

A number of criticisms can be levelled at the Marxist-Leninist theory about the goal and role of trade unions. The first is that too much emphasis is placed on the political role of trade unions outside to the work place. By the same token it tends to undervalue the role of trade unions in production politics which, fundamentally, is the struggle between trade unions and capital over the control of production and allocation of financial resources. The task that trade unions are best able to perform, to defend and advance workers' interests and aspirations at the work place, are relegated to a secondary

position - behind the political role of trade unions in the broader political scene. By doing so they tend to discount the significance of gains made by workers in improving their living standards and increasing their control over their own work situations.

The second criticism relates to the manner in which the theory suggests that workers' consciousness could be influenced and their struggles directed. Connected with this is the role ascribed to trade unions on these issues. At the vanguard of the labour movement is to be placed a political party led by the intellectuals who will direct the working class struggle.

There are a number of problems with this approach. It places the trade union movement in an inferior rather than an independent role with regard to the party which is meant to take the lead in determining political strategies. It thus opens the possibility that the party can engage in strategies that are not in the direct interest of the trade union movement, a risk that can be avoided if the party and unions are autonomous partners in the labour movement.

There is also the assumption that there are no intellectuals in the trade union movement itself. Furthermore, it is assumed that the leaders in trade unions are incapable of providing suitable theoretical guidance. Anderson stated this most clearly:

Trade unions represent only the working class. A revolutionary movement - a party - requires more than this: it must include intellectuals and petit bourgeois who can alone provide the essential theory of socialism.  
(23)

These assumptions are all highly questionable. I would argue that trade unions can and do have intellectuals and that they are best suited to provide workers with appropriate theory for two reasons: as members of the trade union movement they

are more in touch with existing worker consciousness, understanding and aspirations. They can also make the education of workers more effective and appropriate by linking it to organisational issues rather than trying to infuse ideas from outside into workers.

The analysis also ignores the potential force of nationalism both as an ideology and a political movement. Such a possibility needs to be incorporated into an analysis that focuses on the political role of trade unions.

But the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of trade unionism represents only one theoretical approach within Marxism towards trade unions. An alternative Marxist approach towards trade unionism by Richard Hyman, one of the foremost contemporary British theorists on trade unionism, meets many of the criticisms levelled at the Marxist-Leninist theory.

### 1.2 Hyman's Theory of Trade Unions

Hyman opposes what he terms the pessimistic interpretation of trade unionism by Marx, Lenin and other Marxists. Amongst them he includes Trotsky who argued that trade unions became incorporated by monopoly capitalism in that trade union leaders were used to assist capitalism to control workers. (24) Hyman maintains that an analysis that focuses only on the integrating tendencies of trade unions into capitalism is too one-sided in that it disregards the dialectic relationship between trade unionism and capitalist society. As Perry Anderson himself noted, 'trade unions are dialectically both an opposition to capitalism and a component of it'. (25) Hyman thus warns against treating events specific to certain historical periods as absolute truths for all times. Referring to writing which concentrated on the integrative aspects of trade unions, he

points out that 'the historically specific context of these analyses must not be ignored: what is illegitimate is to present as absolutely valid what are essentially conditional relationships'. (26)

For instance, experiences of British trade unions during the 1960s revealed countervailing tendencies to those discerned by Lenin and others: there was an immense upsurge in the challenge to managerial control on the shopfloor. The rank and file challenge was led by shop stewards who negotiated directly with management over a wide range of issues. (27) The evidence, Hyman states, also fails to validate the presumption that the unions, in the absence of the alternative leadership of a revolutionary party, 'automatically succumb to the incorporating embrace' of capitalism. (28) On the contrary, in certain circumstances 'pure-and-simple trade union activity does pose a substantial threat to the stability of the capitalist economy'. (29)

'The essential insight of Marx and Engels', Hyman maintains, 'is that trade unionism necessarily articulates the conflicts generated by capitalist industry'. It does so in two ways: firstly, unionism represents a reaction against economic exploitation and, secondly, it also raises issues of power and control. (30) The importance of this tradition in Marxist writing on trade unionism for Hyman is that they focus on 'the revolutionary potential of the power and control exercised by workshop union organisation'. (31) This strand of Marxist thought is reflected by contemporary British theorists on workers control with their concept of 'encroaching control'. Central to this approach is the insight that social revolution is a process rather than an act or event. They hold the view that inroads

made into capitalist control will eventually lead to socialism.  
(32)

Hyman, however, is rightfully sceptical about the capacity of purely work place struggles and of trade unions by themselves attaining a transformation from capitalism to socialism. Such a transformation would only be possible by means of a strategy which extends to the broader structures of political and economic power. (33) He thus perceives a role for a political party in the struggles of the working class, but appears to support Gramsci's insistence 'that the party must not seek to dominate the spontaneous struggle... Rather the party was to interact with the spontaneous movement in a single dialectical process of development'. (34)

Hyman's conclusion on the role of trade unions in creating a working class consciousness that will challenge bourgeois domination is that it depends upon the prevailing historical conditions and that it can shift radically within a brief passage of time. (35) He thereby emphasizes the importance of specific historical conditions in shaping the role of trade unions. He also differs from the Marxist-Leninist theory in that he does not underplay the role of trade unions challenging managerial control at the work place. Yet another approach which also emphasizes the historical context, but is not rooted in advanced capitalist societies is Rob Lambert's theory of political unionism derived from a study of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU).

### 1.3 Political Unionism

Robin Cohen has pointed out that, due to the highly political nature of trade union activity in newly industrialised countries, they are often referred to as 'political unions'.

Their form is usually considered to be distinct from 'economistic' unions in advanced capitalist countries. (36) The distinctiveness of trade unions in Africa, Asia and Latin America is, according to Cohen, due to certain historical and social factors. These include the politicisation of the unions through contact with nationalist movements, the strategic position that the unions have in the industrialised sectors of the economy as opposed to the relative weakness of authority and legitimacy of the political systems in which unions operate. Trade unions thus have a political influence quite disproportionate to their membership and organisational viability. On the other hand unions generally tend to be weak economically in these countries because of the low level of skills required and the simultaneous existence of a huge reserve of unskilled labour. Consequently they rely on alternative systems of bargaining which are primarily in the political sphere. (37)

Rob Lambert has developed a different conceptualisation of political unionism based on the emergence of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in the 1950s. Except for the link with nationalist movements and the economic weakness of the unions, very different historical conditions faced the Black working class in South Africa during that period. According to Lambert the factors that gave rise to the distinct form of political unionism of SACTU were the exclusion of the Black working class from the political processes, the reliance of the state on repression rather than consent in order to rule, and extensive state intervention in social institutions and the private lives of Africans through measures such as influx control. (38)

Lambert considers the political unionism of SACTU to be a form of trade unionism distinct from Lenin's instrumental view of

trade unions, syndicalism and German Social Democracy before the First World War. Unlike the others, SACTU's political unionism set as its goal the 'transcendence of the economy-politics divide, thereby reconstituting the union-party relationship'.

(39) It broke with the Marxist-Leninist interpretation which stresses a crucial but essentially limited function of trade unionism in the struggle for socialist transformation. As opposed to this Lambert maintains that the political unionism of SACTU allowed for an extended role of trade unions in that they could play a leading and not a secondary role in the political struggle. SACTU premised its approach to trade unionism on the fundamental principle that the struggle against economic exploitation in the factory was inseparably linked to the struggle against political oppression by the state. It would therefore be tactically incorrect to first build a trade union movement around economic demands before taking up township issues and the question of state power. (40)

The essence of SACTU's organisational form was that it created factory committees in the unions which had the task of taking up factory as well as township and state power issues. As SACTU is considered in more detail in the following chapter only the three broad orientations which, according to Lambert, have to be dominant for political unionism to exist, are stipulated here. They are:

first, a leadership strategy of interlacing economic and political struggle in such a way that a movement 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 facilitate this integrated politics, and finally, active engagement in an alliance that has the potential to extend working class influence beyond its own boundaries. (41)

A critical examination of SACTU's organisational strategy

follows in the next chapter which provides an historical exposition of the organisation. Lambert's theory of political unionism and various aspects of Hyman's theory on trade unions are evaluated in the last chapter in order to draw on empirical material in the thesis.

A sharp contrast to Lambert's theory of political unionism is provided by the liberal pluralist theory of trade unionism that stresses the role of trade unions exclusively in the work place.

#### 1.4 Liberal Pluralist Theory of Trade Unions

As in other approaches to trade unions, numerous commentators can be characterised as liberal pluralists. Because Allan Flanders and Alan Fox (in his earlier writing) were two prominent proponents thereof, I shall commence with a presentation of their analysis of the goals and roles of trade unions. It can be traced to two distinct sociological roots: on the one hand to Durkheim's concept, anomie, and on the other hand to Parson's systems theory as applied by Dunlop to industrial relations. In addition the liberal-pluralist theory is grounded on the historical and theoretical work of Sidney and Beatrice Webb. (42)

Flanders and Fox, writing jointly, described anomie as 'a state of normlessness resulting from a breakdown in social regulation' and used it to explain shortcomings of the collective bargaining in Britain in the 1960s. (43) They viewed collective bargaining as a norm-creating process and ascribed the growing industrial disorder in Britain at the time to an increasing fragmentation of existing regulative systems. (44)

Flanders also drew on Dunlop's systems framework by accepting that industrial relations constituted a system of

rules:

Not until recently has it been explicitly stated that a system of industrial relations is a system of rules... In other words, the subject deals with certain regulated or institutionalised relationships in industry. (45)

The sociological basis of their approach was provided by Fox who perceived a plural society as one with distinct interest groups. The task of government in such a society is to control and balance the activities of the sectional groups in order to ensure a maximum degree of freedom of association and action consistent with the general interest of the society. In industrial relations a pluralistic frame of reference recognizes

the right of interest-groups to combine and have an effective voice in their own destiny. This means having a voice in decision-making. (46)

Fox spelled out some implications of this approach. The role of trade unions in the workplace are to regulate managerial relations, i.e. to regulate 'the exercise of management authority in deploying, organizing, and disciplining the labour force after it has been hired'. Consequently 'managerial prerogatives are thereby curbed'. (47)

Furthermore, workers from different enterprises combine together in unions and develop different focuses of loyalty in which they owe their allegiance to leadership other than management. Some important consequences followed from this:

Just as management is an alien authority from the viewpoint of the workpeople, so management in its turn has to come to terms with an alien authority, either in the form of a full-time union officer from outside, or in the form of a union representative within its own boundaries - the shop steward.

Thus in terms of the pluralist frame of reference, management has to face the fact that there are other sources of leadership, other focuses of loyalty, within the social system it governs, and that it is with these that management must share its decision-making.

It follows from this that conflict is endemic to

industrial organization. It does not follow, however, that trade unions introduce conflict into the industrial scene. They simply provide a highly organized and continuous form of expression for sectional interests which would exist anyway. (48)

Flanders arrived at a similar perception of the role of trade unions. His 'starting point in defining union purpose', he claimed, was to 'look at the behaviour of trade unions, to infer what they are for from what they do'. (49) He argued that the primary purpose of trade unions is to engage in collective bargaining. In addition to describing it as the defence and improvement of their members' terms and conditions of employment, he also considered collective bargaining as a rule-making process. Flanders explained the unions' interest and purpose with collective bargaining:

one of the principal purposes of trade unions in collective bargaining is regulation or control...

Unions and their members are interested in the effect of the rules made by collective bargaining, which is to limit the power and authority of employers and to lessen the dependence of employees on market fluctuations and the arbitrary will of management. Stated in the simplest possible terms, these rules provide protection, a shield, for their members. And they protect not only their material standards of living, but equally their security, status and self-respect - in short, their dignity as human beings. (50)

Another social purpose of collective bargaining for Flanders is that it permits members' participation in the affairs of their workplace.

The constant underlying social purpose of trade unionism is, then, participation in job regulation. But participation is not an end in itself; it is the means of enabling workers to gain more control over their working lives. (51)

Although liberal pluralists support the curtailment of some managerial prerogative in the workplace, Fox pointed out that this did not necessarily mean a weakening of managerial power. Managers operating within a pluralist frame of reference realise that they must win the consent of organised workers by

recognising their aspirations and letting them express it through their own leaders. Management thereby integrate organised workers by negotiating with them. In this manner, Fox maintained, management could, paradoxically, retain their power by sharing it with workers.

The pluralistic frame of reference, which openly concedes the severe limitations on management power, constitutes thereby a source of potential strength rather than weakness. (52)

Flanders echoed these views:

The paradox, whose truth managements have found it so difficult to accept, is that they can only regain control by sharing it. (53)

#### Criticism of Liberal Pluralist Theory

Remarkably, some of the harshest criticism of the liberal pluralist theory on the role of trade unions came from Fox himself! In his later writing he turned against liberal pluralism from what he termed a radical perspective. He argued that it was wrong to consider industrial society as being composed of interest groups and that trade unions met management on equal terms. (54) Instead, he maintained that

industrial society ... is more convincingly characterized in terms of the over-arching exploitation of one class by another, of the propertyless by the propertied... (55)

Stemming from this there is an immense imbalance of power between the 'owners and controllers of economic resources' on the one hand and 'those dependent upon them' on the other hand. (56) Trade unions and management therefore do not negotiate with each other as parties with equal strength. Unions are subsequently too weak to challenge management on a whole range of issues.

Trade unions strive to effect marginal improvements in the lot of their members and to defend them against arbitrary management action. They do not - and here we come to the crucial point of what issues are **not** at stake in the management/worker relations - attack

management on such basic principles of the social and industrial framework as private property, the hierarchical nature of the organization, the extreme division of labour, and the massive inequalities of financial reward, status, control and autonomy in work. Neither do they try to secure a foothold in the majority of decisions made within the organization on such issues as management objectives, markets, capital investment, and rate of expansion. (57)

As a result, Fox maintains, the liberal pluralist theory props up an enlightened managerialist position.

The pluralist position remains open to the interpretation of being no more, or no less, than enlightened managerialism, for there are signs that where the objectives of efficient and effective management conflict with the objectives of would-be self-determining work groups, pluralist concern tends to be directed towards finding ways by which the latter can be contained within a regulative framework that promotes and maintains the former. (58)

The criticisms by Fox of the liberal pluralist position are similar to those advanced by Hyman from a Marxist perspective. Hyman adds a further dimension by making explicit what is implicit in Fox's writing, namely that the study of trade unions cannot be wrenched from their social context. (59) With Fryer he wrote that

To understand trade unions it is essential to analyse the environing institutions of power with which they interact: an adequate analysis of trade unions and trade unionism must also be, in large measure, an analysis of the political economy within which they operate. (60)

Consequently Flanders, by deducing the role of trade unions from what they do, provides too restrictive a framework because he only enumerates the activities of trade unions that are considered to be legitimate by powerful external forces.

The effect of powerful external pressures on the definition of trade union objectives is too rarely considered in the study of industrial relations...

When Flanders writes that collective bargaining 'has been the condition for their survival and the basis of their growth' he underlines (perhaps unintentionally) these pressures. For the more ambitious and extensive a union's objectives, the more likely are the politically and socially powerful to express their hostility through

acts of repression. (61)

While there is validity in the radical and Marxist criticisms that the liberal pluralist theory is not based on a class analysis and consequently underplays the imbalance of power between capital and labour and that it seeks to defend enlightened managerialism, they are too one-sided in interpreting it as merely a defence of enlightened managerialism. This is because liberal pluralism ascribes a valid and justifiable role to trade unions in participating in decision-making with management over their own working lives thereby curtailing managerial prerogatives. This encroachment of managerial control in the workplace is a distinct advance for the working class and a position that liberal pluralism helps to ensconce. Radical and Marxist critics are right in pointing out that the frontier of control has only partially been advanced for workers, but they are wrong to interpret this as only being advantageous to management. To the contrary, it in fact represents a retreat for management to safer grounds given the advance of working class strength in the workplace. But trade unions can consolidate their new terrain and use it as a power base for making further advances when conditions become favourable.

Gramsci interpreted this limited advance of trade unions in the workplace in a similar way. He argued that the essence of trade union achievement is the winning of a form of 'industrial legality' which guarantees certain concessions by capitalists to employees. Such concessions represent 'a great victory for the working-class' even though they constitute a compromise. (62)

Gramsci wrote:

The emergence of an industrial legality is a great victory for the working class, but it is not the ultimate and definitive victory. Industrial legality has improved the working class's material living conditions, but it is no more than a compromise - a

compromise which had to be made and which must be supported until the balance of forces favours the working class. (63)

Having outlined two approaches to the study of the aim and role of trade unions, it is appropriate to put forward the one adopted in this thesis to these questions.

### 1.5 Trade Union Objectives and their Requirements

In order to arrive at a position regarding the basic objective of trade unions it is useful to define firstly what trade unions are. Although contemporary trade unions do not only organise wage-earners, the unions that form the subject of this thesis consist exclusively of wage-earners and a small number of union officials. I therefore define a trade union as a continuous organisation consisting of wage earners who have combined together to defend and advance their interests and rights primarily at the workplace, but also in the wider social formation. This definition accords broadly with that of the Webbs:

A trade union, as we understand the term, is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives. (64)

Trade unions owe their existence to the industrial revolution under capitalist relations of production, but they also exist in other social formations. In existing socialist countries they tend to play a markedly different role from trade unions under capitalism as 'productionist' unions. This chapter only addresses their role in capitalist social formations because the thesis focuses on trade unions in South Africa which has a capitalist social formation.

In order to achieve their basic objective of defending and advancing workers' interests at the workplace and beyond, trade unions have four basic requirements: power to challenge

managerial control at the workplace as well as the state and other external forces, democracy to ensure that they reflect the wishes and aspirations of the worker members, leadership to give intellectual and strategic guidance to the organisation, and a common purpose shared by its members to ensure unity and solidarity amongst them. My reasons for identifying these four requirements of trade unions will be briefly motivated before discussing the first three of them in more detail.

The need for power has been emphasized by Hyman and Fryer who maintain that trade unions

constitute a constant challenge to the 'rights of capital': first, to hire labour in the cheapest market; second, to deploy, manage and control labour irrespective of workers' own wishes and aspirations... Trade unions - workers' collective organisations - are thus first and foremost a source and medium of power: and processes of power are central to their internal and external relations. (65)

C. Wright Mills also observed succinctly that

The union is a human institution established to accumulate power and to exert it. (66)

Democracy is essential for trade unions if they are to represent the interests and aspirations of their members. It is also the means whereby the rank and file members can ensure that they ultimately control their own organisations and that the unions' leadership remains accountable to them. This however has to be balanced with the need for leadership in the organisation. The leaders' tasks are to plan, strategise, research and present to workers the different courses of action open to them as well as the likely consequences of each of the courses of action. Flanders expressed the leaders' roles in a similar vein:

Trade union leaders should be ahead of their members in thinking about their problems. It is their responsibility to point out the further and more far-reaching consequences of decisions... however, their principal task must be one of representation. (67)

Leaders thus have to perform an intellectual role in the unions, although it is not necessarily the case that all leaders are intellectuals. There could, on the other hand, also be workers who play intellectual roles in unions. The role of intellectuals and who they are is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

No less important is a common purpose shared by the members if trade unions are to advance workers' interests. A shared common purpose towards a goal is the requirement that turns a trade union into a part of the labour movement. But what is the labour movement? G.D.H.Cole perceives the labour movement historically as the 'child of modern capitalism...and its essential basis is the modern class of wage workers - the proletariat'. (68) He provides a well-formulated definition of the labour movement as

many forms of organisation, based upon the sense of a common status and a common need for mutual help...The term 'movement' implies a common end or at least a community of purpose which is real, and influences men's thoughts and actions, even if it is imperfectly apprehended or largely unconscious... Trade unions, cooperative societies, political parties and socialist organisations - these together make up the modern working-class movement. They are, at bottom, not three or four movements, but one and indivisible; for they arise out of a common need, and depend upon one and the same class, whose ideas and aspirations they seek, from their different standpoints, to express.

Furthermore, he regards its 'most universal and spontaneous form' as the trade union:

They [trade unions] are, and they remain, the essential basis of the the working class movement... Until there are trade unions, there is no labour movement.

Trade unions are thus generally regarded as constituting the backbone of the labour movement. In addition to being an organisation, they are therefore also a movement.

These aspects of trade unions have been linked together well by Flanders who has added an additional requirement, namely the

need for vitality in order to flourish.

Trade unions are a mixture of movement and organization...

One problem which has always confronted trade unions is how to convert temporary movement into permanent organization...

While movement had to be converted into organization if trade unions were to flourish, they could not subsequently allow it to languish and disappear. Trade unions by their very nature have to be dynamic organizations... To sum up, trade unions need organization for their power and movement for their vitality, but they need both power and vitality to advance their social purpose. (69)

In addition to being a movement it has been argued above that trade unions need internal democracy, intellectual leadership and power in order to fulfil their basic objective of defending and advancing workers' interests and rights. But what is trade union democracy, who are intellectuals and what role do they play in unions, and what is trade union power and how is it acquired? The next sections deal with these and related questions.

## 2. Trade Union Democracy

### 2.1 Definition of Trade Union Democracy

According to Hyman the traditional meaning of trade union democracy was:

**popular power**, the active involvement in decision-making of the ordinary members of a community or institution or organisation. By derivation, the existence of positive control by the rank and file is inherent in the language of democracy. (70)

While this approach to trade union democracy is valid, it only states the basic principle of trade union democracy and one is still left with the problem of how to determine whether the rank and file members do exercise control of the union and whether they really are involved in decision-making at all levels of the union.

To complicate matters, the oligarchy found in many unions,

linked with the assumption that trade unions ought to be democratic, led many academic commentators to develop 'weak' definitions of trade union democracy. These definitions laid down less and less stringent criteria for determining whether trade unions were democratic or not. In essence these definitions shifted the emphasis from active involvement on the part of the members to passive consent. (71)

The 'weakest' definitions were provided by V.L.Allen and H.A.Turner. According to them a trade union can be termed democratic if the leaders represent the economic interests of their members and manage to improve their living standards. As long as the leaders' actions meet with the approval of the passive members the union can be termed democratic. Elections and the ability to replace incumbents are of no importance as these can always secure their re-election in any case.

trade-union organization is not based on theoretical concepts prior to it, that is on some concept of democracy, but on the end it serves. In other words, the end of trade-union activity is to protect and improve the general living standards of its members and not to provide workers with an exercise in self-government. (72)

...a second test of union democracy would well be the degree to which such 'passive' members are also able to identify their leadership's policy and actions with their own interests. (73)

The limitation of such a criterion of trade union democracy is that even the most autocratic union leadership can be termed democratic as long as it satisfies the economic interest of its members.

Another approach to trade union democracy has been the test whether union leadership allows or tolerates opposing groups within the union that can challenge their leadership. If they do so, they are deemed to be democratic. This approach was pioneered by Lipset, Trow and Coleman in their study of the

International Typographical Union, 'the only American trade union in which organised parties regularly oppose each other for election to the chief union posts and in which a two-party system has been institutionalised'. (74) They found that the parties had often defeated each other in elections which led them to the conclusion that

Democracy is strengthened when members are not only related to the larger organization but are also affiliated with or loyal to subgroups within the organisation. (75)

Put more succinctly, they define union democracy as 'the institutionalisation of opposition'. (76)

Such a definition of union democracy was however of limited value since the International Typographical Union was the only union that had an entrenched two-party system. However Edelstein and Warner have given a different interpretation of Lipset's ideas on union democracy. They maintain that it would be going too far to say that 'the institutionalisation of opposition' means a party system by definition. Instead, they argue that he stresses the existence of informal organisations, or 'autonomous suborganizations which can function as centers of opposition', and can consequently bypass the formal structures, as essential for trade union democracy. (77)

In contrast to Lipset, Edelstein and Warner stress the importance of the formal organisation and formal structures of trade unions as a key determinant of union democracy. (78) The key indicator they use as a measure of democracy is the extent to which there is competition in the election of top officers in unions. This did not mean that they considered rank and file participation in unions to be irrelevant to trade union democracy, but that they stressed the importance of formal organisation to giving expression to union democracy.

A basic precondition for union democracy is interest and participation in union affairs by rank-and-file activists. Another is suitable formal organisation. (79)

Organisational specifics are important, we maintained, because a high level of democracy may be blocked by any of a number of obstacles: e.g. restrictive rules for nomination, a voting system which provides no representation for minorities at the national level, or a distribution of the membership which permits one or two large regions to dominate elections. (80)

With this approach to trade union democracy they conducted a wide-ranging study of union democracy amongst 31 British and 51 American unions. Their finding was succinctly summarised by Clegg as follows:

democracy is likely to exist in any union where there is serious competition for the top posts. It does not matter whether the opposition succeed in ousting the administration or not, so long as the administration believe that there is a risk that they might, and are therefore under pressure to revise unpopular policies. (81)

Clegg however pointed out that such a test of democracy in the British unions was of limited value since there are unions which elect officials for life while others appoint all their full-time officials. He suggested a 'wider and less precise test of the contribution of opposition to union democracy' as

strong evidence that opposition groups are able to push union administrations into policies or actions which they would not otherwise have favoured. (82)

An even more generalised criterion of union democracy based on the role of opposition within the union, was provided by Martin who suggested that

Union democracy exists when union executives are unable to prevent opposition factions distributing propaganda and mobilizing electoral support. It does not require that opposition should be institutionalized, nor that it should be democratic... - merely that it should survive as a recognized form of political activity. (83)

Martin's underlying assumption is that

union leaders will not tolerate faction unless constrained to do so, since the existence of any opposition limits the range of alternative choices open.

(84)

Such a criterion is however not sufficient to ensure democracy in a union in that it only specifies the conditions that would be necessary to prevent totalitarian rule by union leaders. Even in the most undemocratic of unions it would be wellnigh impossible to prevent opposition from distributing propaganda and mobilising electoral support. (85)

The 'weak' definitions of trade union democracy are unsatisfactory for two reasons. Firstly, they do not explicitly attribute any active role to the rank and file membership of the union in determining whether a union is democratic or not. It seems essential that democracy must entail a method through which rank and file members can and do influence decision-making in the union. In the second place, such definitions are totally unsuitable for a study of independent unions in the 1970s. These unions were emerging during this period and, in addition to being at a very different stage of their development, they were also very much smaller than the established British unions from which these concepts of democracy were derived. Whereas in 1979 the total signed up membership of all the independent unions considered in the thesis was about 44 500 with an average size of approximately 2 300, no less than thirty nine unions in Britain had at least 50 000 members each, while eleven had more than a quarter of a million members each. (86) As the size of a union and the number of its branches increases, the structures and practices required to ensure internal democracy, and maybe even the extent of internal democracy possible in a union, would change. Another approach to trade union democracy is accordingly adopted in the thesis.

Trade union democracy is assumed to exist when workers have ultimate control the union at all levels of the union's

activities. This requires three components: firstly, that elected worker representatives have a majority say at all levels of the union's structures in matters pertaining to the workers, as well as in union policy, and in strategic issues facing the union. Secondly it is necessary that worker representatives as well as union officials are representative of and remain accountable to workers by holding appropriately frequent meetings with workers. Thirdly, rank and file workers need to develop the capacity to understand issues pertaining to all aspects of their union so that they can take well-informed decisions and not simply be swayed by persuasive arguments of union officials. For this to happen it is not only necessary that rank and file workers need to be trained and developed, but also that relevant information about the union be made readily accessible to workers and deliberately shared with them at meetings.

But trade union democracy is not something that can simply be decreed to exist by either its members or leaders. It is a delicate plant that has to be nurtured in order to grow and fortify itself over a long time. Furthermore, union democracy also has to contend with opposing forces that tend to undermine it. In order to gain an understanding of what these are, a useful starting point is the study of Michels of socialist organisations that set out with the intention of being democratic.

## 2.2 Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy

One of the best-known theories on trade union democracy and oligarchy is that of Michels, first published in 1911. (87) In it, he is particularly concerned with the problems of attaining democracy in socialist organisations of the working class. He examines the trends in both political parties and trade unions

and comes up with the 'law' that 'democracy leads to oligarchy, and necessarily contains an oligarchic nucleus'. (88) By virtue of its inherent nature, organisation implies oligarchy for Michels.

Michels' argument is that democracy is a self-defeating goal. This is the case because 'democracy is inconceivable without organisation' and that organisation is vital for the political struggle of the working class. (89) However, there is an inevitable tendency towards oligarchy in every organisation, no matter how hard it strives to be democratic. Therefore democracy is an unattainable goal for all organisations in the labour movement:

Organisation implies the tendency to oligarchy. In every organisation, whether it be a political party, a professional union, or any other association of the kind, the aristocratic tendency manifests itself very clearly... As a result of organisation, every party or professional union becomes divided into a minority of directors and a majority of directed. (90)

The contention by Michels that all organisations become oligarchic is his central argument. It is therefore important to examine the analysis on which he bases this conclusion. Michels perceives the tendency towards oligarchy as inherent in the growth and development of an organisation. In particular, the size of an organisation is a determining factor. 'In the early days of the labour movement', while it is in its 'infancy' and is still very small, Michels maintains that its members attempt to practice a 'pure democracy' which enables them all to participate in its organisations. (91) This is achieved by such devices as rotating the appointment of delegates from among all the members in a trade union and by subordinating the delegates completely to the will of the mass.

At the outset, the attempt is made to depart as little as possible from pure democracy by subordinating the

delegates altogether to the will of the mass, by tying them hand and foot. (92)

However, as organisations grow in size they become more complex to run and start requiring leaders with special expertise to run them. In order to meet these requirements the labour movement starts training their own leadership and establish educational institutions such as Ruskin College, Oxford, for such a purpose. (93)

The increased complexity of the organisations, according to Michels, places a full knowledge of their administrative and other requirements beyond the capacity of the worker members. A division of labour therefore becomes necessary and suitably qualified leaders have to take over the running of the organisation. As this happens, the rank and file lose control of their organisation.

Nominally, and according to the letter of the rules, all the acts of the leaders are subject to the ever vigilant criticisms of the rank and file. In theory the leader is merely an employee bound by the instructions he receives... But in actual fact, as the organisation increases in size, this control becomes purely fictitious. The members have to give up the idea of themselves conducting or even supervising the whole administration, and are compelled to hand these tasks over to trustworthy persons specially nominated for the purpose, to salaried officials. The rank and file must content themselves with summary reports, and with the appointment of occasional special committees of inquiry... It is obvious that democratic control thus undergoes a progressive diminution, and is ultimately reduced to an infinitesimal minimum. (94).

What is more Michels maintains that, in working class organisations, as in the state, officials need to remain in office for a considerable time in order to acquire the necessary expertise to do the work efficiently and to develop a sense of loyalty and responsibility. (95) Their stability and expertise, coupled with such psychological factors as gratitude and the need for leadership felt by the mass (96), makes the leaders irremoveable or at least difficult to replace. The leaders also

deliberately convey the impression to the rank and file that they are indispensable. (97) These phenomena therefore reinforce the tendency towards oligarchy in organisations.

Michels encapsulates his contention that democratic organisations become oligarchic due to a division of labour by stating that:

Every democratic organisation rests, by its very nature, upon a division of labour. But wherever division of labour prevails, there is necessarily specialisation, and the specialists become indispensable. (98)

To summarise Michels' argument, he contends that democratic organisations inevitably become oligarchic because of the technical and administrative complexity required to run them. As a result a division of labour is required which places responsibility for running the organisation in the hands of professional leaders who have the necessary expertise. Control of the organisation then inevitably falls into the hands of this minority of specialists.

A fundamental mistake Michels makes in his exposition is the assumption that trade unions are incapable of finding ways to make officials with expertise representative and accountable to the rank and file membership. While it is the case that trade union officials can and do build up a considerable body of specialised knowledge, it does not necessarily imply that unions become oligarchic and that worker members cannot place some forms of democratic control on such officials.

### 2.3 Goal Displacement and Bureaucracy

Michels' book has been credited as the first extensive study of goal displacement of organisations, in his case the goal of creating democratic socialist organisations. Since then numerous studies have documented goal displacements in a large

variety of organisations to the point where it has become a near common belief that organisations reverse their goals and the means with which to attain these goals:

The mildest and most common form of displacement is the process by which an organization reverses the priority between its goals and means in a way that makes the means a goal and the goals a means. The most common means so displaced is the organization itself. Organizations are instruments; they are created to serve one or more specific goals. But in the process of forming them, of granting them resources, and of recruiting personnel, interest groups are formed which are frequently concerned more with preserving and building up the organization itself than in helping it to serve its initial purpose. (99)

The goal displacement of organisations is usually attributed to the fact that they had become bureaucracies. In addition bureaucracy is frequently presented as the opposite or at least a countervailing force to democracy in organisations. The problem with using the concept 'bureaucracy' as an analytical tool to signify the absence of democracy in organisations is that it has developed a multiplicity of meanings. As Albro has shown, there exist no less than seven contemporary concepts of bureaucracy, some of which are completely incompatible with each other. (100)

Because of the indeterminacy of the concept 'bureaucracy', the concept that is used throughout this thesis to signify the absence of democracy in trade unions is oligarchy. Oligarchy is given the meaning in this thesis attributed by Edelstein and Warner to Lipset: the control of an organisation by a few individuals who exercise it in their own interests by virtue of their grip on strategic posts in the organisation. (101)

When the term bureaucracy is used in the thesis it is used in its Weberian sense to signify a legal-rational form of organisation to which Weber has attributed well-known characteristics such as hierarchical offices with a downward

chain of command, consistent application of a system of rules, and so on. (102) Such a concept of 'bureaucracy' does imply non-democratic forms of organisation because of its hierarchical command structure. Weber was also of the opinion that as bureaucracy developed at the level of the state it severely undermined democracy. (103)

Gouldner has attacked Michels and other social scientists for spreading a 'metaphysical pathos' of pessimism and fatalism in theories of group organisation.

Instead of telling men how bureaucracy might be mitigated, they insist that it is inevitable. Instead of explaining how democratic patterns may, to some extent, be fortified and extended, they warn us that democracy cannot be perfect. (104)

He pointed out that Michels completely ignored countervailing democratic tendencies in trade unions and counterpoised Michels' iron law with his own:

Even as Michels himself saw, if oligarchical waves repeatedly wash away the bridges of democracy, this eternal recurrence can happen only because men doggedly rebuild them after each inundation. Michels chose to dwell on only one aspect of this process, neglecting to consider this other side. There cannot be an iron law of oligarchy, however, unless there is an iron law of democracy. (105)

In addition Hyman has pointed out that Michels has not given adequate attention to tendencies opposing oligarchy in trade unions. Amongst these are the normative assumption prevalent that trade unions ought to operate democratically and the involvement of members in shop floor trade unionism. (106)

An alternative approach to trade union democracy and oligarchy is to see them as opposing tendencies co-existing in trade union organisation with their interaction unfolding in an historical context. Thus democratisation and the tendency towards oligarchy are both processes while their relative strength, and the dominance of the one over the other, depends

upon the organisational practices and structures in the union as well as the conjuncture of factors operating on it at a particular time. This approach is embodied in the exposition of industrial democracy by the Webbs based on their knowledge of British trade union history.

#### 2.4 Sidney and Beatrice Webb on Trade Union Democracy

In their study of democracy in British trade unions, Industrial Democracy, first published in 1897, the Webbs demonstrated that the trade unions went through different stages of development. In certain stages democracy was in the ascendency while oligarchy and centralisation were paramount in other stages. The circumstances and forces that determined which of these tendencies dominated were closely linked with their histories.

#### Participatory Democracy and its Oligarchic Consequences

The first stage, one the Webbs termed 'primitive democracy', took place in the local trade clubs of the eighteenth century and was a pure form of participatory democracy. The members strove to conduct all the business at the general meetings and were imbued with the principle that 'what concerns all should be decided by all'. (107) The president was often only chosen for a particular meeting and the next most important officers were usually chosen by rotation. The early 'trade clubs' were thus organisations in which all members participated without differentiated officials.

However, when the local unions started federating into national unions between 1824 and 1840, it became necessary to depart from their practice of participatory democracy. They dropped the custom of rotating the officials as it became

necessary for the national unions to elect full-time secretaries. They still tried to continue vesting supreme authority in the members by means of the Referendum which was the right of any section of the union 'to insist on its proposals being submitted to the vote of the whole electorate'. (108)

These constitutional arrangements were however a recipe for oligarchy. The appointment of a full-time general secretary soon turned him into a powerful official by virtue of the expertise he developed.

Spending all day at office work, he soon acquired a professional expertness quite out of the reach of his fellow-members at the bench or the forge... The work could no longer be efficiently performed by an ordinary artisan, and some preliminary office training became almost indispensable. (109)

In order to try and restrict the growing power of the full-time salaried officials the unions resorted to laying down strict rules in their written constitutions. Even the drafting and amending of these rules were not relinquished by the members: branch delegates were granted no discretion and merely had to convey the votes already taken in their branches. (110)

Over time the meetings of delegates were replaced by the Referendum because it was more economical. The Referendum however had the opposite effect of what was intended: instead of the members retaining a real say in the affairs of the union, control was centralised and enabled the development of oligarchic rule by the officials and executive. This happened because

the right of putting questions to the vote came practically to be confined to the executive... Any change which the executive desired could be stated in the most plausible terms and supported by convincing arguments, which almost invariably secured its adoption by a large majority... The reliance of Trade Union democrats on the Referendum resulted, in fact, in the virtual exclusion of the general body of members from all real share in the government. (111)

Thus, after about a century of organisational experience, the

oligarchic tendency was dominant in the British trade union movement towards the last decade of the nineteenth century. This, the Webbs maintained, was because of the attempt to retain participatory democracy in the national organisations. (112)

Up to this stage the Webbs' findings confirmed the conclusion reached by Michels that all organisations inevitably became oligarchic. They did however not subscribe to Michels' view about its unavoidability, no matter what. They stated that the more advanced trade unions had become aware of the existence and causes of oligarchy 'after a whole century of experiment'. Trade union constitutions were undergoing a 'silent revolution' and trade unions with 'a typically modern form of democracy' emerged after 1889. (113) The form of democracy the Webbs were referring to was representative democracy which, in their opinion, was successful in solving

the fundamental problem of democracy, the combination of administrative efficiency and popular control.  
(114)

#### Representative Democracy as a Countervailing Tendency

The two unions that best embodied the principle of representative democracy at the time the Webbs conducted their research, were the Coalminers and Cotton Operatives although other unions had also followed suit. At that stage the membership of the Coalminers union was 200 000. (115) The central feature of the system of representative democracy was the election of an assembly of representatives as the supreme body in the union. Not only was the representative assembly the supreme policy-making body of the union, but it also appointed an executive committee which governed the union between conferences of the assemblies. (116)

The unions with representative democracy had undergone

considerable evolution from the early forms of 'primitive democracy'. No provision was made for the Referendum and the 'Rotation of Office' was dropped. Of particular significance was the fact that the unions found it necessary to abandon completely the use of delegates and to replace them with representatives. (117) The distinction between a delegate and a representative was that, although both had to put forward the mind of their constituency, the representative, unlike the delegate, was 'not a mechanical vehicle of votes on particular subjects'. (118) The tasks of a representative were much more sophisticated as a result. According to the Webbs, the trade unions had gradually come to realise the need for representatives as a method of restoring a balance between democracy and efficiency in their organisations. They realised that the workers needed their own working-class representatives with sufficient expertise to control the professional officials. However, if a representative gave up his trade to devote all his time to trade union duties, this created a dilemma because

This unfortunately tends to alter his manner of life, his habit of mind, and usually also his intellectual atmosphere to such an extent that he gradually loses that vivid appreciation of the feelings of the man at the bench or the forge, which it is his function to express... If he remains essentially a manual worker, he fails to cope with the brain-working officials; if he takes on the character of the brain-worker, he is apt to get out of touch with the constituents whose desires he has to interpret... (119)

In order to obtain a balance between workers' aspirations and efficient administration, the unions had thus made provision for representation of mental and manual labourers on their assemblies and executive committees.

As it is, the presence in their assemblies of a large proportion of men who are still following their trade imports into their deliberations the full flavor of working-class sentiment. (120)

The executive of the Cotton Operatives, for instance,

consisted of three office bearers as well as thirteen additional members, seven of whom had to be working spinners while the remaining six were permanent officials. (121) This had the effect of restoring some popular control in the unions. Although the officials still tended to dominate at the assembly conferences the worker representatives frequently intervened 'with effect' in the procedures. (122)

Thus contrary to Michels, the Webbs perceived a countervailing democratic tendency within the trade union movement. Oligarchic rule did not establish itself permanently in the unions, but was challenged by worker representatives who endeavoured to restore popular control to the unions. This worker participation however only took place at the level of the supreme representative assembly, not the shopfloor. This not only limited the potential for trade union democracy through rank and file participation, but also opened the way for oligarchic tendencies to re-assert themselves in the unions.

## 2.5 The Assertion of Workplace Bargaining: Trade Union Democracy Rises from the Ranks

However, in the same year that the Webbs completed their first edition of Industrial Democracy, 1897, a major industrial dispute took place in the engineering industry that was to lay the foundations for shopfloor democracy in British trade unions more than half a century later. Management in the industry made a bid to break the hold craftsmen had over their occupation up to that time. It was enforced by shop stewards who were the craftsmen's representatives and had the task of retaining their monopoly over the craft. The employers won the dispute, but an unforeseen consequence of their victory was 'a widening of the scope for shop steward action' as the shop steward became 'both

the guardian of the craft rules and a workplace negotiator'.  
 (123) A revolutionary shop stewards movement briefly sprung up in the engineering and shipbuilding industries as a response to the impetus given to job dilution during the First World War. But the movement was short-lived and the economic depression in the interwar years caused workshop organisation to fall back.  
 (124)

Although shop stewards re-emerged once the British economy started recovering and during the Second World War, it was not until the 1950s and especially the 1960s that they came to the fore in industrial relations by shifting the emphasis to workplace bargaining. The drive to this was provided by the rise in rank-and-file strength and militancy generated by the establishment of near full employment and frustration with managerial and trade union practices and policies. During this period

Its characteristic expression was the unofficial strike which ignored union authority and side-stepped established procedures for wage and dispute settlement.  
 (125).

This 'great upsurge of union activity' (126) constituted, in the words of Flanders, 'a challenge from below'. (127) Goldthorpe characterised the change in post-war Britain as an increase in 'the economic and organisational strength of the workers on the shopfloor - in consequence of which, the degree of effective control that can be exercised over them by either managements or unions has been significantly diminished'. (128) This resulted in a shift in the bargaining advantage to the workers on the shopfloor. (129)

In opposition to many liberal-pluralist commentators who were concerned about the 'challenge from below', Hyman, writing in 1975, perceived it as 'the reassertion, far beyond their

original craft context, of prior traditions of autonomous worker control'. (130) Shop stewards were playing a central part in the upsurge of workplace bargaining in post-war Britain. Their role was no longer one of protecting a craft, but negotiating directly with management on the shopfloor over wages and a wide range of working conditions. A survey conducted in 1973 established that, besides wages, shop stewards negotiated most frequently with management over general conditions in the workplace including safety and health, dismissals and other disciplinary actions, overtime, the introduction of new machinery or jobs, and transfers from one job to another. (131)

Because of the resurgence in shopfloor bargaining the number of shop stewards, already large, increased considerably during the 1960s. Although no absolutely reliable measurements are available, Clegg estimates that there were about 175 000 shop stewards in 1959. A survey conducted twelve years later led to the conclusion that there were between 250 000 and 300 000 shop stewards in Britain in 1971. (132)

The upsurge in autonomous workplace bargaining under the leadership of shop stewards made its impact felt on trade union organisation as well. The most significant change was the incorporation of shop stewards into the union structures. This resulted not only from the unions' desire to restore the control over industrial relations they had lost by the 1960s, but also the power shopfloor representatives had acquired in the workplace. By impelling themselves onto the various bodies of the unions, shop stewards did much to restore democratic practices in the unions once again. Shop stewards replaced branch officers as the lay members on the unions' executives and conferences as well as on regional and district committees. The significance of such a structural change was that decision-making

in the union shifted towards the shopfloor as pressure could be brought to bear from the shop stewards who had autonomous power-bases in the workplace. (133) In this way democracy was advanced in the unions as Clegg explained:

Trade union workplace organizations have therefore promoted democracy within British trade unions by bringing important decisions closer to the members; by exercising a direct influence over their trade union leaders; and by assisting in the development of factions. In addition a number of important unions have adapted their constitutions to give workplace organizations a recognized place within the machinery of government. (134)

In summarising the changes in British trade unions since the Second World War, Clegg considered the structural changes that accommodated the growth of workplace bargaining an outstanding development since

This development...has substantially strengthened union democracy. The opportunities for trade union members to have a say in the decisions which affect their working lives have been increased by the larger share which their workplace representatives now enjoy in the central and regional government of the unions; by the greater volume of issues affecting employment which are now settled by plant and company bargaining conducted by these representatives; and by the direct participation of trade union members in deciding these issues through either ballots or votes at mass meetings. (135)

## 2.6 The Cycle Continues: Oligarchy on the Shopfloor?

The presence of both democratic and oligarchic tendencies in trade union organisation is further underscored by the development of a centralisation of control amongst shop stewards. Writing in 1979, Hyman cast doubt on the democratic nature of shop floor representation:

A central feature of the past ten years has been the consolidation of a hierarchy within shop steward organisation... Workplace negotiation has become a far more centralised process... The introduction and operation of centralised bargaining arrangements has been the responsibility of a new layer of full-time convenors and shop stewards... the small cadre of full-time or almost full-time stewards within a committee often possess the authority and the informational and

organisational resources to ensure that their own recommendations will be accepted as policy by the stewards' body. (136)

With the development of centralisation and specialisation amongst shop stewards British trade unionism appeared to have come the full cycle. The 'primitive democracy' of shop stewards was giving way to leadership by full-time experts, only on this occasion they were located directly on the shopfloor. Some of Hyman's contentions were however exaggerated in that he assumed that there was necessarily an undemocratic quality to the specialisation and division of labour that was taking place amongst shop stewards. As Clegg has pointed out,

An oligarchy exists only if leaders are willing to exploit the opportunities created by apathy and have the power to do so. (137)

Hyman overlooked the scale aspect of shop steward representation. On average the number of members a shop steward represented was about fifty. Combined with that he underplayed the importance of direct contact shop stewards had with their constituents whom they saw every day. (138) The pressure on shop stewards to be representative of a small number of members was therefore much higher than the pressure could be on more remote union officials. In his study of workers at the Ford plant in Halewood, Beynon also vividly demonstrated that shop stewards were subjected to both bureaucratic and representative forces and that they became vulnerable if they lost the support of 'their troops'. (139) Beynon was thus closer to the mark than Hyman about the role of shop stewards in writing:

The tension between the need for trade union organization and mass participation in that organization is a vital and irresolvable one. A gap exists between the shop stewards and the rest. A gap created by the very fact of sustained activism and enforced by its organization... In coping with this the steward finds himself torn between the forces of representation and bureaucratization. Between the need to represent the immediate wishes of their members and to provide a long-

term strategy that will protect the interests of those members. (140)

Enough exposition on trade union democracy and oligarchy has been presented to draw some conclusions about democracy and oligarchy in unions. The experiences of the British trade unions over two centuries deny Michels' iron law of oligarchy, but rather confirm that tendencies towards democracy and oligarchy are both present in trade unions. The tendency towards democracy arises from the members' conviction that their trade unions have to represent their interests and aspirations. To this end they desire to have a say over union policy as well as accountability of their representatives and officials. The say over union policy and accountability of officials have been remote at times, but remained the driving force of democracy in the unions. Democracy was thus usually impelled into the unions by the workers.

The relationship between the tendencies towards democracy and oligarchy in trade unions unfolds in a historical context. Neither democracy nor oligarchy establishes a permanent or decisive hegemony although the one or the other can dominate for a considerable time. It is also possible for both tendencies to manifest themselves simultaneously in trade unions with the unions displaying both democratic and oligarchic characteristics at the same time. (141) The forces that determine the dominance of oligarchic or democratic tendencies may be either internal or external to the unions.

One of the reasons for the tendency towards oligarchy in trade unions arises from their need for leadership, in particular intellectual leadership, in the organisation. This makes the role of intellectuals and the question of who constitutes intellectuals in the organisation an important question to

consider.

### 3. Intellectuals in Trade Unions

The role of intellectuals in trade unions and the labour movement in general has been subject to widely different interpretations. In particular, the role of intellectuals who are leaders and have a socialist persuasion has been subjected to negative criticism by some while others have ascribed constructive roles to them. On the negative side have been authors such as Michels and Selig Perlman while on the constructive side have been analysts such as Gramsci and Wright Mills.

Michels perceived intellectuals as 'persons possessing knowledge' who had played a special role in social life. (142) He viewed the greatest contribution to the labour movement to have been made by Marxism because 'it intellectualized the modern labour movement'. (143) These intellectual socialists are however 'in some ways untrustworthy as leaders' even though they may initially be perceived in heroic terms by the proletariat.

When a movement is still naive and inchoate, the intellectual who offers his services appears as a saviour and as such worthy of confidence and admiration. Even when the supply of intellectual leaders has increased and new, 'really proletarian' leaders have begun to develop from the workers' ranks, the intellectual is indispensable because of the increasing complexity of the problems...' (144)

Problems however start arising with the role of these intellectuals. They 'tend toward impossibilism': by 'becoming dogmatic and pedantic, they ride a movement to death for the sake of "immortal" principles'. (145) In addition

intellectuals first tend to have utopian illusions concerning the character of the proletariat; and their subsequent discovery that workers are also human beings sometimes makes them cynical. (146)

Perlman similarly held views about Marxist intellectuals'

dogmatism which could subsequently be abandoned. (147) He however went further than Michels and argued that workers and intellectuals actually had conflicting interest and that workers had to struggle against the intellectuals' attempts to dominate them.

Trade unionism, which is essentially pragmatic, struggles constantly, not only against the employers for an enlarged opportunity measured in income, security, and liberty in the shop and industry, but struggles also, whether consciously or unconsciously, actively or merely passively, against the intellectual who would frame its programs and shape its policies. (148)

As opposed to labour's 'home-grown' philosophy, intellectuals endeavour to impose an alien anti-capitalist ideology on workers:

All intellectuals ... are alike desirous to make their own ideology also the ideology of labor. (149)

Although Perlman acknowledges that labour history 'cannot deny to the revolutionary intellectual a truly pivotal part in the labor struggles of the past', (150) he and Michels only focus on negative characteristics of socialist intellectuals in the trade union movement. While these characteristics are familiar ones that do exist amongst some of the intellectuals, they are not the only features nor are they held by all intellectuals. The only conclusion that could be drawn from their analysis would be that intellectuals should stay away completely from the trade union movement. Yet there is a need for intellectuals in the movement and a more appropriate question to ask would be how such engagement could take place to try and ensure that intellectuals played a directive role while yet not undermining democracy in the unions.

Gramsci paid considerable attention to the role of intellectuals in capitalist society and their part in struggles attempting its transformation to socialism. Although his

analysis pertained mainly to the role of intellectuals in a revolutionary party, much of it is highly applicable to trade unions. While his theory of intellectuals was incomplete (151) and unresolved difficulties remained (152) it contained valuable insights on the role of intellectuals. A division was made by Gramsci between 'traditional' and new or 'organic' intellectuals which, for the purposes of this thesis, it is not necessary to explore.

His starting point lay in his definition of intellectuals who, he maintained, were not identified by their professions, but by the function which they perform.

By 'intellectuals' must be understood not those strata commonly described by this term, but in general the entire social stratum which exercises an organisation function in the wide sense - whether in the field of production, or in that of culture, or in that of political administration. (153)

Furthermore, with every class in society emerges intellectuals who function on behalf of that class by giving it 'homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields'. (154) Likewise the working class, if it wishes to emancipate itself from its position as a subaltern class and acquire a hegemonic position in society, requires to develop its own 'organic' intellectuals. The function of these intellectuals would be to organise in economic, cultural and political spheres. A revolutionary party would be the key organisation through which they would operate. Their role as intellectuals had to be 'in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser, "permanent persuader" and not just a simple orator'. (155) This has been expanded upon as follows by Sassoon:

The organic intellectual of the working class is a builder, an organiser, a permanent persuader so that he is able to engage in all aspects of the struggle. He is aware of the complexities of production, he is able to

wage the cultural struggle for hegemony, and he is also able to prepare the political struggle which will culminate in the seizure of power. (156)

Sassoon's elaboration also applies to the role which intellectuals in support of the working class could be expected to play in trade unions. (Since the distinction between traditional and organic intellectuals was not gone into, what Gramsci would call organic intellectuals are henceforth referred to as intellectuals.) The key feature of it is that they should be able 'to engage in all aspects of the struggle': whether economic, political or cultural. Over and above that they also have to perform the key tasks of administrative co-ordination and strategic thinking and guidance of the unions.

Two problems in applying Gramsci's definition of intellectuals to trade unions is that he did not specifically elaborate the functions of intellectuals in a trade union. The other difficulty is to determine who the intellectuals are in a union and distinguishing them from other leaders. Intellectuals cannot simply be assumed to be all those people in the unions with university level education. On the other hand not all leaders, whether union organisers or worker representatives, function as intellectuals in the union movement. In deciding who the intellectuals are in the independent unions the functions of administrative co-ordination and strategic planning in the union will be used as key criteria.

A more concrete study of the role of intellectuals in trade unions was performed by C. Wright Mills in his examination of the American union movement. He identified four kinds of intellectuals. Firstly, professionally trained intellectuals such as researchers, economists or lawyers. They were on the labour leader's staff, but did not share his power. Secondly, there were the 'radical party' intellectuals who followed the

'line' of the party and sought to promote it amongst the rank and file leaders within the unions. Such intellectuals tried to redirect the workers from 'pure and simple unionism' to more political action. Thirdly the free-lance research intellectual who has no foothold in the institutions of the labour movement. These kinds of intellectuals, with the exception of the party intellectual, tended to be weak in the unions. (157) The fourth type of intellectuals with power and influence in the unions, bears resemblance to Gramsci's description of intellectuals of the working class as the following quote from Mills bears out:

The effective intellectual member of the team of power and ideas will have to combine features of the party intellectual, the staff thinker, and the free-lance research man. In his actual working operations, he must unite these three role... He must, in brief, master every skill that is needed to be a labor leader. He must be what we may call a union-made intellectual... They are union thinkers, with a big job on their hands... such men are in themselves a link between ideas and action... they compete by having their ideas acted out, for better or for worse... (158)

Mills refers glowingly to union-made intellectuals and links their presence in unions with democracy and power in the unions:

One basic test of a union's democratic vigor is whether or not it generates a broad stratum of union-made intellectuals... In the end such men are the only guarantee of the union of power and ideas. (159)

He does not however provide empirical evidence in support of this assertion. Nor does he show an awareness of the tensions between strong intellectual leadership and union democracy or elaborate on the link between intellectuals and union power. Mills was however aware that trade unions strove to accumulate power. It is this requirement of trade unions that we consider next.

#### 4. Trade Union Power

There is an awareness amongst theorists that trade unions do need to acquire power to achieve their basic objective. In addition to Mills' insight Hyman and Fryer have pointed out that

Trade unions - workers' collective organizations - are thus first and foremost a source and medium of power: and processes of power are central to their internal and external relations. (160)

The critical focus of an analysis of power for them is 'the differential distribution of control over and access to resources and sanctions, both material and ideological'. (161) A more precise, if somewhat philosophical, definition of power as such has been provided by Steven Lukes. He defines 'the concept of power by saying that A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests'. (162) The exercise of power involves 'the double claim that A acts (or fails to act) in a certain way and that B does what he would not otherwise do... In the case of an effective exercise of power A gets B to do what he would not otherwise do'. (163) Lukes's conceptualisation of power is adopted in this thesis with the assumption that A represents trade unions and B generally represents agents of capital or, on occasion, the state.

Although there is a realisation that power is essential to trade unions there is a remarkable absence in the literature on the strategies they have adopted in order to accumulate power. Furthermore, when there has been a focus on the acquisition of power it has tended to focus on the external environment facing trade unions rather than the strategies adopted by unions to build up the power they need to advance workers' interests. For example, in presenting 'some of the determinants of the power which unions can exercise', Hyman and Fryer maintain that 'the starting point for any realistic analysis must be the massive

power imbalance between capital and labour'. (164) The actual determinants of union power which they identify are objective and subjective:

Of the former, the most significant are the strength or density of organization among the potential membership, and the strategic importance of the workers covered ... power also depends on the manner in which the workers perceive their situation and interests, and the solidarity and determination with which they pursue their objectives. Workers who perceive no major conflict of interests with their employers are unlikely to organize effectively. (165)

While these general perceptions are valid, there are however no account of the strategic ways in which unions try to increase their density of organisation or how they attempt to influence workers' perception of their workplace situation. This could be due to Bain's authoritative research on aggregate union growth. He concluded that 'only a very small amount of union growth can be unambiguously attributed to the independent influence of union leaders and their policies'. (166)

However, countervailing research of specific unions by Undy and others came up with different findings. They found that unions' 'structure, government, policy and leadership significantly affect disaggregated and aggregated union growth'. (167) The study by Undy and others however focuses on union growth as opposed to union power. While there usually would be a positive correlation between union size and and union strength, this need not necessarily always be the case. In addition, strategies that affect the power of unions are not the same as factors that determine union growth.

On the other hand Phelps Brown did conduct a study on the historical origins of trade union power in Britain and three other countries, but focused primarily on the influence of external factors to trade unionism. In summarising his findings on the historical origins of trade union power, none of the eight

headings referred to strategies adopted by the trade unions themselves. (168)

One of the main tasks of this thesis will accordingly be to examine the strategies the independent unions adopted to acquire and hold onto power.

## Chapter 2

### The Political Economy of African Labour in South Africa in the 1970s

#### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to sketch the milieu which faced the independent trade unions as they emerged, struggled to survive, and grew during the 1970s. It thus presents the historical heritage of African trade unionism and the political economy of African labour in South Africa in the 1970s and is divided into four major sections. The first section presents the history of African trade unions in South Africa preceding the advent of the independent unions. Their upsurge and the reasons for their decline are examined with most detail being paid to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The second section considers economic aspects that were of relevance to the independent unions. It traces the structural changes in the economy during the 1960s as well as economic fluctuations in the 1970s. The extent of foreign ownership and control over investment and policy decisions of South African subsidiaries of multinational corporations are briefly examined. Characteristics of the South African labour force concentrating on African employment, unemployment and wage levels in the 1970s are also presented.

The third and fourth sections examine the ways in which the South African state regulates and controls the African working class with a view to subordinating it politically and economically. Section three deals with ways in which the state has fortified divisions in the working class along racial lines,

the state's control over the movement of Africans and the allocation of their labour by means of influx control, and the state's expanding repressive powers in the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, section four carefully analyses the system of industrial relations in South Africa, the changes it underwent during the 1970s, and the reasons for these changes.

## 1. African Trade Unions in South Africa before 1970

### The Long Struggle: from ICU to SACTU

Trade unions and strikes are not new to African workers in South Africa. Strikes by African workers have been recorded as early as mid-nineteenth century. (1) African trade unions already existed before 1920 and by 1970 African trade unionism in South Africa had gone through three major cycles of growth and decline before 1970.

#### ICU

The first significant large-scale African worker and farm labour tenant organisation was the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa, the ICU, which was founded in Cape Town in 1919 by Clements Kadalie from Nyasaland. The ICU was neither the first nor the only African worker organisation existing at that time. In 1917 the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA), a general union of African workers, was founded in Johannesburg under the aegis of the International Socialist League, a precursor of the Communist Party of South Africa. (2) At that time there was 'a broadly based movement of working class opposition' on the Witwatersrand which concentrated on the mining industry. It finally reached a climax in February 1920 when, over a period of a week, a strike wave by 71000 African mine workers hit the mines. (3)

The IWA extended its organisation to Cape Town in 1919 and

competed to some extent with the ICU for African members. (4) But it was the ICU which grew to a remarkable size and received support at one time or another during its existence from more than 150 000 members. (5) But the ICU was not purely a trade union. It started off as a town-based general trade union, but from 1927 onwards 'the movement became a peasants' revolt.' (6) It has been described as a combination of trade union, political pressure group, and mass movement; (7) also as a Black protest movement. (8)

But by 1930 the ICU had collapsed. Its demise can be attributed to four factors. Firstly, incompetent leaders who lacked

any adequate theory of how economy and society functioned in South Africa, and this in turn prevented them from evolving any adequate strategy to promote change. (9)

Not only was the leadership incompetent, but some also had bourgeois aspirations, such as starting on business ventures, that were inappropriate to a mass worker organisation. There was also corruption amongst the organisers who used their position for personal aggrandisement. (10)

Secondly, the ICU failed to organise workers in the factories and thus did not build itself up as a trade union with a power base at the workplace. However, in saying this it is important to bear in mind that the South African economy was not heavily industrialised in the 1920s and that the large majority of African workers were semi-proletarianised migrant workers. Appropriate conditions for industrial unionism therefore did not yet exist. (11)

Thirdly, the ICU made promises to the farm labour tenants of their political and economic liberation that it was not in a position to fulfil. Initially it enjoyed an immense surge of

rural popularity, but then disillusionment and disaffection set in when the promises of the ICU leaders proved to be empty. (12)

Finally, the ICU was hounded by farmers and harassed by the state. Although the state repression was mild by comparison to measures taken after the 1950s and not all employers were opposed to the ICU, the hostility of agricultural capital and the state played some role in disrupting and disorganising the ICU. (13)

#### CNETU

The second upsurge of African worker organisation took place during the Second World War. Although this revival of the trade union movement had its roots in African unions that were started in the late 1930s, it grew immensely in size and strength during the Second World War. This was due to an increased militancy on the part of African workers and a strengthening of their bargaining power because they were in high demand as a result of the shortage of skilled White workers who were engaged in the War effort. (14) The industrial base for the growth of a proletariat in South Africa also expanded considerably during the War. In the manufacturing sector net output increased by 116% from 1939 to 1945. Total employment in manufacturing over the same period increased by 53% to 361 000 with the faster increase being that of Africans whose employment rose by 74% from 143 000 to 249 000. (15)

The Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) was founded in November 1941 with Gana Makabeni as its first president. The following year African worker militancy soared reaching a peak in December when 8000 African workers across a wide range of industries went on strike. The strike wave ebbed after the state promulgated War Measure 145 that made all strikes illegal after December 1942. (16) Thereupon the CNETU leadership, supported in

their stance by the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), dissuaded workers from going on strike. Their reason for doing so was to assist South Africa and its Allies in the war against fascism. (17) This policy caused a division in CNETU: a group of unions, under the leadership of Dan Koza, opposed the policy and formed themselves into the Progressive Trade Union Group which subsequently acted as an opposition inside CNETU. (18)

These factors served to weaken CNETU, but accounts of its size and strength appear to contradict each other. According to one source, CNETU had a membership of 119 unions situated in all the major centres of the country with a combined membership of 158 000 in 1945. (19) However, no in-depth research into CNETU has been done to establish whether these unions were well organised in the workplace or whether they simply signed on masses of members. Nor has it been established how reliable these membership figures were. According to another source the unions were losing members at the end of the War because they could no longer win improvements. The Council was further weakened by internal divisions that led to a splintering in 1945. Firstly the Progressive Trade Union Group was expelled, and then Makabeni was removed as president of CNETU for being too reformist. He was replaced by J.B.Marks, chairman of the African Mine Workers' Union (AMWU). Makabeni thereupon tried to form a splinter organisation, the Council of African Trade Unions, but without lasting success. (20) As a result the Transvaal CNETU was too weak to cope with the demands of the African mine workers' strike in August 1946. (21)

The AMWU was by far the most important union in CNETU. It was founded in 1941 after a conference had been called for that

purpose by the ANC. It grew rapidly and by 1944 claimed to have a paid up membership of 25 000. (22) In response the state passed War Measure No. 1425 which prohibited meetings of more than 20 persons on mine property without a special permit. (23) Although this was disruptive to the union it carried on organising and called a strike in August 1946 in demand of higher wages after both the Chamber of Commerce and the Government had refused to have any dealings with it.

The strike by 76 000 African mine workers was viciously repressed by the state. Police drove the striking miners back to work and violence erupted resulting in nine deaths and 1248 injuries. (24) The Transvaal CNETU called a general strike in support of the mine workers, but the leaders were arrested and the movement was too weak and dispersed to take up the call. The general strike never took place. (25)

The outcome of the African mine workers' strike hastened the collapse of the trade union movement. At the Annual Conference of CNETU in 1947 thirty six unions were represented. (26) Further state repression followed in 1950 with the passage of the Suppression of Communism Act which was used to expunge trade union leaders. By 1953 CNETU had virtually ceased to function.

On existing evidence it would appear that state repression was the major cause of the collapse of CNETU and that internal divisions also played a role albeit more minor. But this interpretation needs to be treated with caution. A definitive answer for the demise of CNETU cannot be given until more research has been done on the level of organisation in its affiliated unions, the degree of cooperation between the different unions and groups within the Council, and the nature and consequences of its relationship with the ANC and SACP.

## SACTU

The third resurgence of African trade unionism took place with the foundation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in 1955. The initiative came from progressive unions in the former Trades and Labour Council, a multi-racial federation of registered trade unions, which were opposed to the new South African Trade Union Council (soon to change its name to TUCSA) because of its refusal to allow African unions to affiliate. The banned SACP evidently also played a role in the formation of SACTU. (27) The remaining few CNETU unions were invited to join the progressive unions in forming SACTU. (28) SACTU was therefore not a confederation composed exclusively of African trade unions. The largest unions at the formation of SACTU were the Food and Canning Workers Union, the Textile Workers' Industrial Union, the National Union of Laundering, Cleaning, and Dyeing Workers and their associated or parallel African unions. (29) In 1956 SACTU had 19 affiliated unions with a claimed membership of 20 000. (30)

From its very inception SACTU perceived the struggle against economic exploitation to be inextricably linked to Blacks' political oppression. At its first annual conference in 1956 it accepted as a main point of policy that

SACTU is conscious of the fact that the organizing of the mass of workers for higher wages, better conditions of life and labour is inextricably bound up with a determined struggle for political rights and liberation from all oppressive laws and practices. It follows that a mere struggle for the economic rights of all the workers without participation in the general struggle for political emancipation would condemn the trade union movement to uselessness and to a betrayal of the interests of the workers.

SACTU therefore committed itself fully to the broader political struggle as well as organising workers into trade unions. From the outset SACTU allied itself with the Congress

Alliance whose other members were the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured People's Congress and the (White) Congress of Democrats. (31)

In the first two years of its existence SACTU's central thrust was to organise new unions and strengthen the weaker ones. According to Lambert, its organising strategy right from the outset was based on the establishment of factory committees. These committees were intended to exist of 'the most trained, experienced, and politically conscious workers at factory level'.

(32) They had two functions:

first, they created a union membership base in the factory directed at the development of collective struggle around immediate factory issues; second, they generated the direct involvement of factory workers in township and state power issues through involvement in the alliance resistance campaigns. (33)

These committees were widely established, particularly in Natal where meticulous factory organisation was taking place. However in Transvaal, where SACTU organisation was the weakest, they never really developed. (34)

SACTU also decided to start up local committees which would organise workers into unions in certain strategic industries. Initially it decided that mining and agriculture were beyond their means to organise even though they were crucial to the country's economy. It decided that they should concentrate on organising the metal and transport industries as well as the docks.

With one or two exceptions, the local committees did not however make much headway and, in 1958, National Organising Committees (NOCs) were set up to take over these tasks. The following year the NOCs also commenced organising mining and agricultural workers and in 1960 started up General Workers' Unions in industries too small to organise into industrial unions

at first. (35) These efforts did increase SACTU's trade union membership: by 1961 it had fifty one unions with a combined membership of 53000. (36) But although a couple of the new unions that were founded by SACTU grew fairly large, they did not survive the subsequent state repression. The major established and registered unions, namely Food and Canning, Textile, and Laundry unions remained the backbone of SACTU's trade unions. (37)

Persistent problems that dogged SACTU's attempts to organise trade unions were a drastic shortage of finance and consequent lack of sufficient organisers; (38) Many organisers were also overburdened with too many tasks laid upon them. The heavy load was, according to Feit, due to the great variety of campaigns and political issues the Congress Alliance entered into and that SACTU had to help carry out. (39)

The established SACTU unions however carried on concentrating on workplace organisation and increased their membership. The Food and Textile unions also entered into industrial conflict with powerful employers that developed into trials of strength at times. The FCWUs were involved in a strike at Spekenham in Cape Town in 1957 and a lockout at Langeberg Kooperatiewe Beperk in Port Elizabeth in 1959. While the strike was lost, the unions won the lockout because of the solidarity between the workers and the unions as well as the support of the Congress movement which threatened a potential national boycott of the company's products. (40)

Major strikes the TWIUs engaged in were at the Hex River Textile Mills in the Western Cape in 1956, which was successful in gaining substantial wage increases, at the Frame Group's Consolidated Textile Mills in Durban, which resulted in the rooting out of union leadership at the plant, and at Amato

Textile Mills in Benoni in 1958. The Amato strike was exceptional as no less than 3 800 of the mill's 4 400 African workers went on strike after the unions had sustained organisation there for over a decade. Management were however implacable and the strike was lost after police ferociously baton charged the strikers leaving 73 injured. The defeat also completely shattered the unions' organisation in the factory which was never to recover. (41)

After the Alexandra bus boycott that heightened African militancy and political consciousness, SACTU decided in 1957 to adopt a new strategy and to embark on mass campaigns. The major one, which was inspired by the Congress Alliance and was to carry on for five years, was the Pound-a-day Campaign. It had two aims: the one was to win a minimum wage of a pound a day through government legislation, the other was to induce African workers to join SACTU. The intention was to recruit 20 000 new members into the organisation. (42)

SACTU considered the Pound-a-day Campaign to be its most successful achievement in the 1950s and 1960s. Employers' Associations and the government took note of the Campaign. After a one day stay-away in 1957 in support of the Pound-a-day Campaign there was a marked increase in Wage Board sittings. New determinations were made in a number of industries that reversed the trend of declining real wages. (43) The Associated Chamber of ~~Conference~~ <sup>Congress</sup> (ASSOCOM) agreed to meet with SACTU at a round-table conference in 1959 and the South African Federated Chamber of Industries (SAFCI) corresponded with SACTU. (44) However, the minimum wage legislation never materialised and even SACTU-affiliated unions could not always take up the pound-a-day demand in their negotiations with management. (45) This was due

to the fact that the demand for a national minimum was not organisationally linked with the unions and what they could feasibly demand in negotiations with management.

However, in the opinion of SACTU the main achievement of the Pound-a-day Campaign was not higher wages, but the recruitment of thousands of new trade union members and the education of workers through the process of mass campaigning itself. (46) The Pound-a-day Campaign was in fact intertwined with four stay-away campaigns that SACTU immersed itself in. These campaigns were of crucial significance to SACTU.

The first stay-away called by the Congress Alliance on 26 June 1957 was inspired by the upsurge of militancy generated by the Alexandra bus boycott. Although the one day stay-away was called over a range of issues it included the Pound-a-day demand that coincided with SACTU's Campaign. The call was well supported on the Rand where 80% of the African workers stayed away from work, but not in other industrial centres.

The second stay-away turned into a complete failure and revealed that SACTU occupied an inferior status in the Congress Alliance. SACTU called a National Workers' Conference in March 1958 to plan the stay-away. However, what started out as a trade union undertaking was soon extended to become a Congress Alliance campaign. In the process it lost its worker orientation as well. Chief Luthuli, who was president of the ANC at the time, stressed that two errors would have to be avoided in connection with the Conference:

Firstly the error of assuming that a "Workers' Conference" is the same thing as a trade union conference. It is not, especially in this country where the overwhelming majority of workers aren't organised into unions. Secondly, the error of forgetting that Congress is not exclusively a workers' organisation; it has in its ranks businessmen, professionals, housewives, etc. (47)

As a result the demands formulated at the National Workers' Conference for the stay-away were extended from a Pound-a-day to include the abolition of pass laws and an extension of the franchise. By so doing the leadership of the Congress Alliance had transformed an essentially working-class campaign into a popular multi-class campaign. The stay-away was planned for the three day period from 14-16 April 1958 to coincide with the White parliamentary elections and the slogan 'The Nats must go' was adopted. However, there was division within the ranks of the ANC over the campaign and officials of five African trade unions on the Rand dissociated themselves from the stay-away. Employers expressed threats to potential strikers and the state mobilised its military and police forces on an unprecedented scale. (48)

The stay-away turned into a damp squib as most of the workers round the country failed to heed the call. At the end of the first day the ANC leadership, without consulting SACTU, called off the stay-away. This unilateral action on the part of the ANC caused a serious but temporary strain between SACTU and the ANC. The question was raised whether SACTU had equality with its partners in the Alliance. SACTU leaders came to realise that many ANC members did not regard SACTU as an important force in the struggle. They perceived that SACTU would have to take a more independent stand on matters directly affecting the working class in future. (49)

The dismal failure of the stay-away led to considerable analysis and self-criticism on the part of the Congress movement. Amongst others, Dan Tloome maintained that there was confusion over the issues on which the stay-away was based, and that trade unions and factory organisation was not strong enough. (50) The failure also resulted in a reformulation of worker organisation strategy on the part of the ANC and Congress movement as a whole

where a far clearer realisation of the importance of organising the working class emerged. There was thus a shift towards more basic methods of mobilising people with considerable emphasis being given to the organisation of workers at the factory level. (51)

The ANC subsequently adopted the position that all workers in the Congress should become trade unionists. The Congress Alliance set up an Action Committee in 1961 whose task it was to boost and direct SACTU's efforts to strengthen the trade union movement. These proposals at first raised fears in the minds of some SACTU members that the Congress Alliance was again placing SACTU in a subordinate position, but they were placated when further deliberation made it clear that SACTU was to lead the organising campaign. (52)

Although these plans tended to get overlaid by further political campaigns and their drastic repercussions for the Congress Alliance, Lambert found that in regions where the alliance was strong a SACTU mass base developed rapidly. Thus SACTU had its largest union membership in Natal and the Eastern Cape where the leadership of the ANC was sensitive to the need to develop a trade union base. On the other hand SACTU was weakest in the Transvaal where the ANC leadership paid little attention to the unions. (53)

However, the plans to build up really strong work place organisation were lost in the rapid onrush of events that commenced with the PAC mass pass campaign that resulted in the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960. (54) The ANC called on workers to stay-away on a day of mourning on 28 March and in most large industrial areas there was a 90% response by African workers. (55) The government reacted by rushing the Unlawful

Organisations Act through parliament that allowed it to ban both the ANC and PAC on 30 March 1960.

As SACTU was the only remaining mass movement in the Congress Alliance able to operate legally, the burden henceforth fell on it to run mass campaigns initiated by the Alliance. The stay-away was prolonged for ten days in Sharpeville and Langa and was accompanied by mass popular protests. The state reacted harshly with intensive military and police operations and detained 11 300 Africans under the powers of the state of emergency it had declared. Hundreds of SACTU leaders and rank-and-file workers were amongst the detainees. In some regions virtually all the full-time staff and leading members were detained. SACTU thus paid a heavy toll in the 1960 stay-away. (56)

The fourth and final stay-away SACTU engaged in was against the formation of a White dominated Republic in May 1961 with a call for a national convention of all the people in South Africa to draft a new constitution. SACTU played a crucial role in organising workers in various areas for the stay-away. The call to stay at home was however only partially heeded by Black workers throughout the country. A survey conducted at the time by SACTU (and possibly biased in favour of trade unionism) reported that the strongest response took place where workers were most organised:

Workers who are organized into trade unions are more responsive to a political call than unorganized workers. Their trade union activity has given them heightened political consciousness and they also respond more readily when the appeal is made on a factory, as opposed to a residential basis, as they feel that there is less chance of dismissal if the whole factory is involved. (57)

However the state also took intensively repressive steps against the planned stay-away. All SACTU meetings were banned

for three months as from the end of March 1961 which meant that they had to carry out their operations clandestinely. (58) The state armed itself with greater powers of arrest and truly went on the offensive:

[Townships] were surrounded by tanks and armoured cars. Houses were searched nightly by armed police, backed by riot squads. Helicopters, fitted with searchlights, flew over townships; 10 000 Africans were arrested and held without charges. With the townships sealed off by police and army roadblocks and newspapers taking part in the 'conspiracy of silence', the state was able to take advantage of the confusion by distributing pamphlets from 'the pathfinders', 'Sons of Zululand' and used the radio to call on workers not to strike. Under police pressure, employers were encouraged to dismiss workers who did not report for work. Townships were toured by police using loudspeakers to threaten workers with deportation to the "Reserves" if they took part in the stay-away. (59)

A yet more intensive state onslaught followed after Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the banned ANC, embarked on its first act of sabotage in December 1961. Because many of SACTU militants were also active in Umkhonto, it received further blows as the state took retaliatory action after the passage of the 'Sabotage Act' (General Law Amendment Act) in 1962. (60)

Although SACTU was never declared an unlawful organisation, it was effectively destroyed inside South Africa by the end of 1963. It carried on as a movement in exile.

Different reasons have been advanced for the demise of SACTU inside South Africa. Luckhardt and Wall, whose book was edited by a SACTU Editorial Board which accepted final responsibility for it, attributed the demise entirely to state repression. The book, however fails to come up with any but the mildest of criticisms of SACTU. (61) Feit has attributed it to the political unionism of SACTU. He maintained that SACTU consequently neglected workplace organisation because it was over-extended by involvement in numerous other activities. (62) Lambert and Bonner, on the other hand, do not attribute the

demise of SACTU to its political trade unionism as such, but to the subordinate role assigned to SACTU and trade union organisation in the Congress Alliance.

More specifically, Lambert has contended that it was the dominance of the ANC and the Communist Party of South Africa as well as the failure of SACTU leaders to distinguish between the strategic roles of the different organisations that led to SACTU's demise:

here lies the essence of SACTU's failure: it was not that the leadership undervalued trade unionism or shop-floor organization, nor did failure lie in their inability to develop a mass base, rather it lay in their subordinate position within the alliance. The ANC and SACP leadership decided on the pace of events and SACTU followed as the means of realizing long-term strategy. SACTU had no independent leadership. At every level of the organization, SACTU members were members of ANC, and could not distinguish, in their own minds, the difference between the two forms of organization, or which had priority in achieving goals.

Because of SACTU's subordinate position, decisions to launch national strike campaigns were taken with little reference to the level of preparedness and maturity of working class organisation. It was the dominance of the ANC and SACP in the alliance, that finally led to the smashing of SACTU, at the very point that it was both developing a mass base and an experienced leadership. I refer here to the SACP-led decision to embark on the sabotage campaign against the state. The campaign led to extreme repression by the state, with the ninety day Act detentions and the long-term imprisonment of the new wave of experienced SACTU leadership that had developed in the past five years. Leaderless, the less experienced layers were lost. (63)

Bonner has put a slightly different emphasis on his interpretation in that he attributed SACTU's decline to an analysis of the national liberation struggle which required the subordination of the trade union movement to that struggle:

Wedded to the idea of a proletarian revolution, the SACTU leadership, like that of the SACP, believed that it could take place only after a national bourgeois revolution; consequently the trade unions were to be incorporated in that struggle and subordinated to national revolutionary ends... This idea seems to have been transferred to SACTU's analysis of the national struggle, leading them to subordinate the trade union

movement to the national liberation struggle...  
(64)

SACTU also underestimated the significance of industrial strikes in mobilising and organising workers. In an earlier study Lambert contended that

the Congress Alliance emphasized the mass strike campaigns rather than industrial strike action. SACTU supported industrial strike action when it occurred, but such action was not a central tenet of its strategy for political change. (65)

The analysis of Lambert and Bonner appear valid explanations of SACTU's disintegration and collapse. An added factor was that SACTU's leadership in Transvaal and possibly other regions as well, did not sufficiently appreciate the arduousness of building strong trade unions at the point of production. In these regions there was a continuous attempt to take shortcuts in the time-consuming struggle of building up a powerful trade union movement in the factories. The shortcuts took the form of repeated attempts to mobilise workers into unions by means of mass campaigns, but such mass mobilisation was inappropriate for organising and strengthening unions at the workplace.

There was also an underestimation on the part of the Congress Alliance as a whole of the state's capacity to expand and utilise its repressive powers. SACTU's interwovenness with the Alliance therefore incurred the state's oppressive wrath at a stage when it was not strong and resilient enough to withstand the onslaught.

## 2. The Economy

### 2.1 Economic Growth and Structural Changes in the 1960s

After the banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960, the crushing of SACTU and the destruction of African working class leadership, the South African economy experienced a boom in the early 1960s and sustained a high growth rate right up to 1971. In the ten

year period commencing in 1962, the economy maintained an average annual growth rate of no less than six per cent.

During this period of high growth there was an increase in the concentration and centralisation of capital in South Africa. As a result the South African economy had reached a stage by the 1970s where monopoly capital was dominant i.e. where, in most industrial sectors, a single or small number of companies played a decisive and dominant role. (66) In other words, the economy had become highly oligopolistic. The Mouton Commission of Inquiry into the Regulation of Monopolistic Conditions Act of 1955, performed an in-depth investigation into the concentration of economic power for four major divisions in the South African economy, namely the manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trade, and transport divisions. Its findings were based on censuses conducted between 1969 and 1972. It found that, in all four divisions, ten per cent of the largest firms controlled at least 74,6% of the respective markets and concluded that

The Commission's investigation, based on internationally accepted methods, confirms an exceptionally high degree of concentration of economic power in the four major divisions of the South African economy that were analysed... It seems reasonable to infer that those sectors of the economy not included in the survey, would show more or less similar results. (67)

The Commission also found that the manufacturing industry was particularly oligopolistic. It established that in 37 out of 181 manufacturing subgroups, i.e. in 20,5% of all the subgroups, the share of the single largest firm was in excess of 50% of turnover. (68) A more detailed study of economic concentration in the manufacturing industry was conducted by P.G. du Plessis. He found that, in 1972, 30% of the manufacturing sectors were highly concentrated, i.e. the ten largest firms in the sector controlled at least 70% of turnover.

A further 20% of the sectors were concentrated, i.e. the ten largest firms controlled between 50 and 69% of turnover. Thus 50% of the manufacturing sectors was either concentrated or highly concentrated. (69)

A consequence of the growing centralisation of capital in the 1960s was that the structure of the manufacturing industry shifted towards large plants employing more than 500 employees and intermediate plants with between 200 and 499 employees. Table 1 presents the increase in the number of small, intermediate and large establishments between 1961/62 and 1972 for some of the manufacturing sectors in which the independent unions organised as well as for the manufacturing industry as a whole. The Iron and Steel Basic Industries, the most capital-intensive sector in the manufacturing industry, is divided slightly differently with a category for very large plants with over 1 000 employees.

The trend is clearly visible for the manufacturing industry as a whole. The number of small plants (employing up to 199 employees) stayed more or less constant over the period whereas the number of intermediate size plants increased 1,6 times from 511 to 833 and the number of large plants more than doubled from 199 to 414. There was thus an upward shift from 31,6 to 41,7% of the employees working in large plants in the manufacturing industry. The structural change in the Food sector was very similar with the number of small establishments declining slightly and the large plants doubling from 30 to 60.

Table 1  
Increase in Manufacturing Establishments from 1961/2 to 1972

Employment Size Group	No. of Establishments and Percentage Employed 1961/2		1972		Prop. Change of No. (2)
	No.	% Empl. (1)	No.	% Empl. (1)	
<b>Iron and Steel Basic Industries</b>					
1-199	120	16,6	98	9,1	0,8
200-999	13	14,4	31	18,7	2,4
1000+	6	68,9	11	72,7	1,8
Total	139	100,0	140	100,0	1,01
<b>Fabricated Metal Products (Excluding Machinery)</b>					
1-199	1181	49,8	1823	50,9	1,5
200-499	48	21,1	82	22,2	1,7
500+	23	29,0	33	26,8	1,4
Total	1252	100,0	1938	100,0	1,5
<b>Machinery (Excluding Electric Machinery)</b>					
1-199	458	46,8	817	40,6	1,8
200-499	24	20,7	58	26,9	2,4
500+	8	32,4	23	32,5	2,9
Total	490	100,0	898	100,0	1,8
<b>Electrical Machinery</b>					
1-199	939	53,4	414	31,6	0,4
200-499	25	27,6	35	20,4	1,4
500+	7	19,0	21	48,0	3,0
Total	971	100,0	470	100,0	0,5
<b>Textiles</b>					
1-199	168	22,1	440	21,8	2,6
200-499	35	25,5	64	19,7	1,8
500+	22	52,3	52	58,5	2,4
Total	225	100,0	556	100,0	2,5
<b>Food (excluding Beverages)</b>					
1-199	1449	47,1	1378	39,0	0,95
200-499	83	27,2	106	23,6	1,3
500+	30	25,7	60	37,3	2,0
Total	1562	100,0	1544	100,0	0,99
<b>Manufacturing - Total</b>					
1-199	11093	45,6	11424	36,0	1,03
200-499	511	23,0	833	22,4	1,6
500+	199	31,6	414	41,7	2,1
Total	11803	100,0	12671	100,0	1,1

Notes (1) Employment includes all population groups.

(2) The proportional change of number of establishments uses the number of establishments in 1961/2 as the unit. A figure less than one thus shows reduction in no. of establishments.

Sources: Bureau of Statistics, 1961-2, Table 3;  
Dept of Statistics, 1972, Table 1.7.1.

The greatest structural change took place in the Electrical Machinery sector where the number of small plants fell by more than half, the intermediate plants increased from 25 to 35 and the large plants trebled from 7 to 21. As a result the proportion of all the employees in the Electrical Machinery sector engaged in large plants shot up from 19 to 48%. The Iron and Steel Basic Industries showed a similar though less pronounced change: the number of small plants declined by about 20%, whereas the plants employing between 200 and 999 employees increased markedly from 13 to 31, and the very large plants almost doubled from 6 to 11.

Some of the manufacturing sectors did not however undergo a structural change in terms of the size of their plants during the 1960s. What rather happened was that these sectors grew extensively and that all the establishments, whether small, intermediate or large, increased by more or less the same proportion. In the Fabricated Metal Products all the establishments regardless of size grew at almost the same rate and increased their numbers by about one and a half times. The proportion of employees in large establishments in this sector in fact decreased slightly from 29 to 26,8% over the period. Similarly, in the Textile sector the number of small and large establishments went up about two and a half fold with the small plants growing at a slightly faster rate than the others.

It has been argued that a suitable industrial base did not yet exist at the time SACTU was organising and, in particular, there were not enough large establishments in which the union movement could consolidate its shopfloor organisation. (70) But Table 1 indicates that the foundations of industry had already been firmly laid by 1961/2 and was already extensive enough to have provided SACTU with up to about 700 intermediate

and large establishments if it had intended to concentrate on shopfloor organisation. In addition there were another 721 establishments employing between 100 and 199 employees in the manufacturing industry by 1962. (71) Nonetheless the rapid expansion of the manufacturing industry in the 1960s did lay a more solid base with considerably more large plants on which the emerging independent unions could build.

In order to gain a wider perspective of the economy and the role the African working class played within it in the 1970s, the employment pattern for the South African labour force as a whole is briefly considered in the next section.

## 2.2 The South African Labour Force in the 1970s

By 1970 the total economically active population in South Africa was 8,1 million of which 5,7 million or 70% were Africans, 1,5 million or 19% were Whites, and the remaining 11% were Coloureds and Indians.

The South African labour force was occupationally highly differentiated by colour. Simkins and Hindson have clearly demonstrated this for all the sectors of the economy outside agriculture and domestic service. They established that Whites were ensconced in the upper occupational echelons as they constituted over 90% of senior and lower executives, professionals and senior clerical staff. (72) At the bottom end of the occupational spectrum they found that Africans predominated equally overwhelmingly. Throughout the 1970s Africans filled more than 88% of the unskilled labour occupations. (73) Furthermore the proportion of the African labour force in wage employment that they categorised as working class was no less than 90% in 1971, but decreased slightly to 87% by 1979. (74) The Coloured and Indian labour forces fell

between these two extremes with Indians constituting a greater than average proportion of owners and executives in small private firms while a greater than average proportion of Coloured workers were in skilled and semi-skilled occupations. (75)

In 1970 agriculture still absorbed by far the largest proportion of the African labour force. It accounted for almost 40% of the African labour force of which half were engaged in subsistence agriculture in the 'homelands'. The service sector was the next largest employing 19% of all Africans, over half of whom were women in domestic service. Mining was the third largest sector in terms of employment with 11% while manufacturing was the fourth largest with only 9% of the African labour force. The other sectors employed even smaller proportions of the labour force. (See Table 2)

Table 2  
Economically Active Africans in South Africa, 1970

Industrial Division	Number	%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2 260 386	39,6
Services	1 088 950	19,1
Mining and quarrying	609 823	10,7
Manufacturing	513 926	9,0
Commerce and finance	346 477	6,1
Construction	289 851	5,1
Transport and communication	138 459	2,4
Electricity, gas and water	29 918	0,5
Unemployed and not classifiable	429 045	7,5
Total	5 706 835	100,0

Source: Central Statistical Services, South African Statistics 1982, Table 7.5.

It is worth noting that the independent unions built their base in the 1970s within manufacturing, commerce and finance, construction, transport and communication which, between them, employed only 22,6% of the African labour force. Unlike mining (where most of the workforce was impounded in compounds) or agriculture (where the workforce was subject to patriarchal

controls), these sectors of the economy were more readily available for organisation.

### 2.3 Foreign Investment and Control in South Africa

Changes were also taking place during the 1960s in the composition and role of foreign investment in South Africa. Manufacturing overtook mining as the most important recipient of foreign capital. Whereas, in 1960, approximately 33% of foreign holdings were in mining with 27% in manufacturing, by 1969 about 31% of South Africa's private sector liabilities (excluding banking) were in the manufacturing industry whereas the share of mining had dropped to second place with 25%. (76)

Most foreign investment in South Africa was held by Britain although its share declined steadily during the 1960s. For instance, in 1960 it held 64% of foreign liabilities and in 1966 this had dropped to 57%. The share of the United States, traditionally the second largest foreign investor in South Africa, remained more or less constant at around 14% during the 1960s, while the Western European share rose rapidly from 14% in 1960 to 25% by 1972. (77)

United States investment in South Africa reflected the monopoly structures of the host country. While more than 300 American companies had invested in South Africa, twelve of the largest dominated the field by supplying over three quarters of the United States capital invested in 1972. These were mainly motor and oil corporations.(78)

The form of foreign investment also shifted increasingly from indirect to direct investment. Between 1956 and 1969 direct investment rose by as much as 120% while indirect investment only increased by 26%. As a result the proportion of foreign liabilities composed of direct investment rose from 61%

in 1956 to 74% in 1969. (79)

During the 1960s the lion's share, around 70%, of direct investment in South Africa came from Britain, most of which was concentrated in the manufacturing sector. (80) The United States also concentrated the bulk of its direct investment in manufacturing. (81) There were two reasons for the growing importance of direct investment. The first is that many British and American transnational corporations were already established in South Africa and much of their investment was financed from unremitted profits. During the four year period ending in 1971 no less than 81% of British direct investment came from unremitted profits, while, in the case of the United States, an average of 68% of direct investment was provided by this source over a ten year period ending in 1971. (82) The second reason is that high profits were earned by these investments. (83)

The significance in the rise of direct investment lies in the fact that it increases the extent of foreign control over the South African economy. This is because 'the essential difference in motives of the two investors is that the non-direct investor does not seek to control the manner in which the return on his investment is appropriated, while the direct investor does... Direct investors ... are continually seeking new opportunities as a source of the future growth of their organizations. They desire control over the application of their funds'. (84)

The precise extent of foreign control of South African manufacturing is hard to determine. A United Nations study in 1968 stated that 22% of manufacturing capacity was controlled by foreign interests, but a South African Commission of Enquiry in

1970 argued that as much as 40% of the country's industry was foreign-controlled. The Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut had even placed the figure as high as 80%, but is probably an overstatement for political reasons. (85)

However, it is important to bear in mind that statistics of capital shares alone do not present a full picture of the extent of dependency of the South African economy. This is because there is a further reliance on foreign technology, technical know-how and expertise. A survey conducted amongst South African affiliates and branches of foreign companies in the early 1970s found that only 4% of local companies said that the parent company had no direct influence over decisions in regard to the production process. Sixty seven per cent of the affiliates were prescribed to in regard to choice of machinery, while only eight per cent claimed complete autonomy. (86)

Thus even though the South African economy was relatively highly industrialised with its own large corporations, it was nonetheless characterised by a considerable amount of dependency on and control from advanced capitalist countries. As we shall see below, the independent trade unions tried to exploit this dependency to their own advantage in the 1970s.

Another economic factor that was of considerable importance to the independent unions during the 1970s was the economic recession that commenced in the second half of 1974. The next section therefore considers economic cycles during the period.

#### 2.4 Economic Fluctuations in the 1970s

From 1966 to 1975 the real gross domestic product (gdp), excluding agriculture, forestry and fishing, grew at an annual average rate of 4,8%. Then, in 1976 and 1977 the economy slumped severely with the rate of increase of the non-

agricultural gdp slowing down to only 0,6% per year. The slump was due to a number of factors including the political upheavels in Southern Africa resulting in the transfer of power to Frelimo and the MPLA in Mozambique and Angola, the South African military invasion of Angola late in 1975, the Soweto uprising of June 1976, and the protracted and severe international recession in capitalist countries, including South Africa's major trading partners, during 1974 and 1975. Economic activity in South Africa recovered slowly in 1978, but gained a strong momentum from about the middle of 1979. During the period from 1978 to 1981 the non-agricultural gdp rose at an average annual rate of 4,7%. (87)

Within the long run growth trend there were also cyclical fluctuations in the level of economic activity during the 1970s. The cycles have been classified by Smit and van der Walt as follows.

Upward Phase

January 1968-December 1970  
September 1972-August 1974  
January 1978-August 1981

Downward Phase

January 1971-August 1972  
September 1974-December 1977

According to Smit and van der Walt, the moderate slow-down of economic activity in 1971 was followed by a more pronounced cyclical decline in 1972. However, in the second half of 1972 the economy was stimulated again and the economic upswing gained considerable momentum in 1973. The downward swing that commenced in September 1974 was not only due to cyclical factors, but also due to the political and external factors outlined above. As a result, the downward phase of the business cycle in this period lasted no less than 40 months, almost three times the length of an average post-war phase. The economic upswing that followed only gained significant momentum as from the middle of 1979 and sustained a high growth rate until the third quarter of 1980. The upward swing of the economy ended a year later. (88)

Fig. 1

COINCIDING INDICATORS

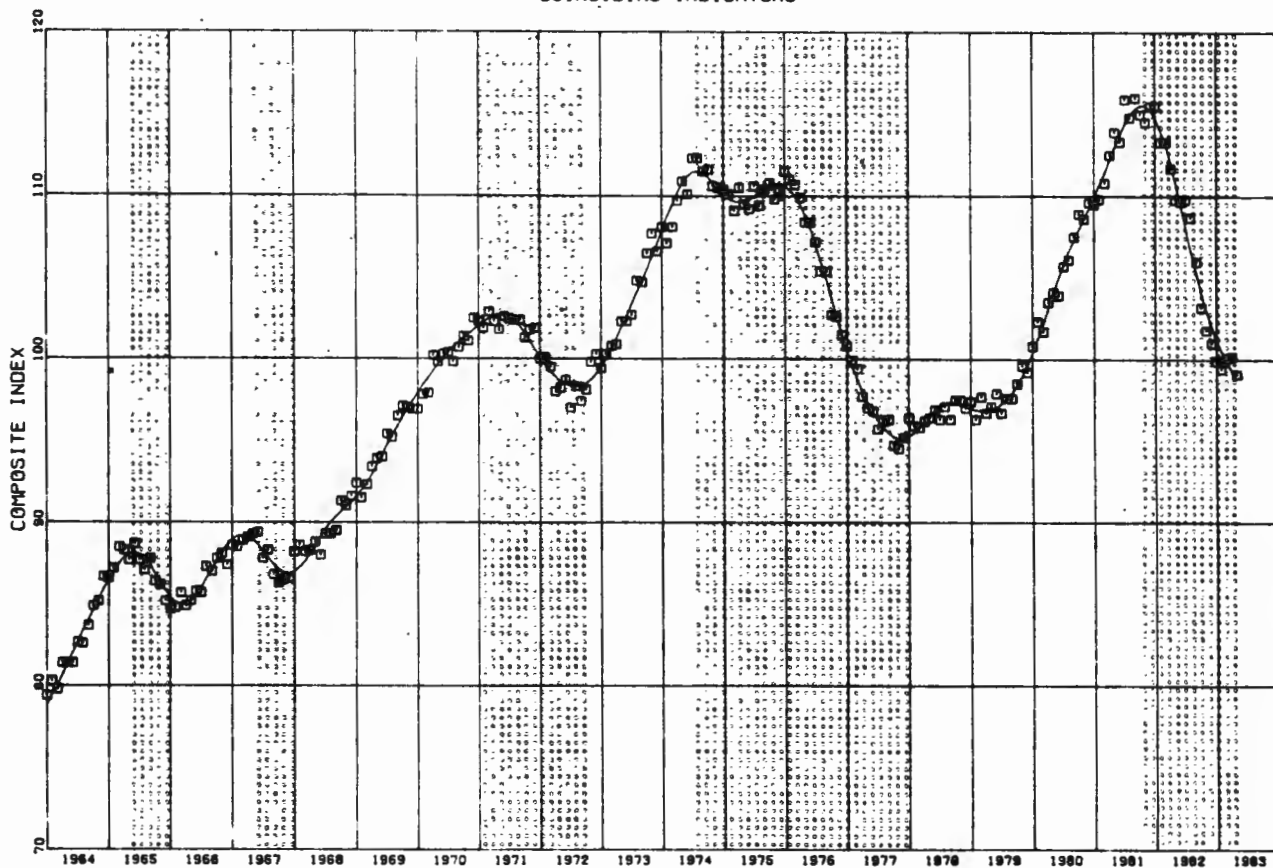
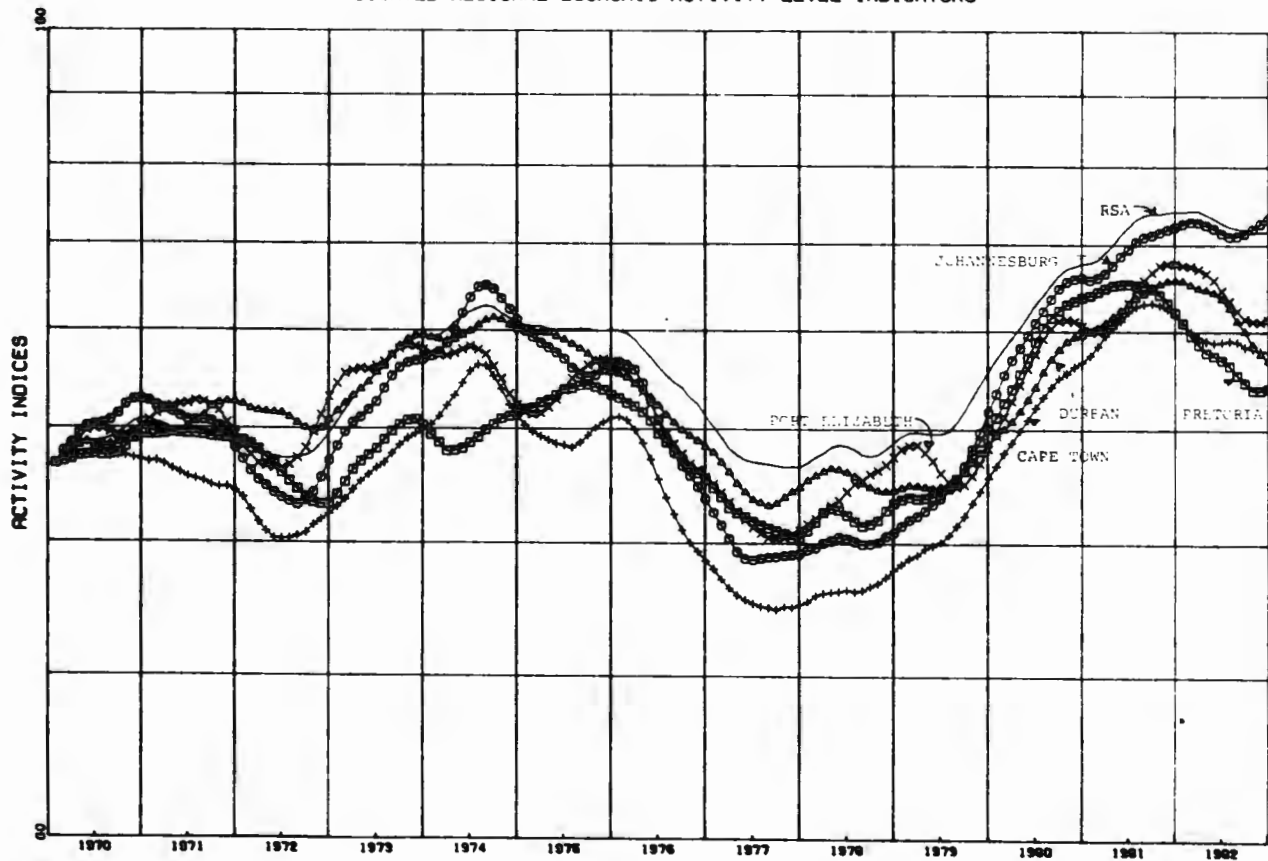


Fig. 2

WEIGHTED REGIONAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY LEVEL INDICATORS



Source: Bureau for Economic Research, University of Stellenbosch, 1983 Trends, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 1, 20, 26, 27.

Fig. 3

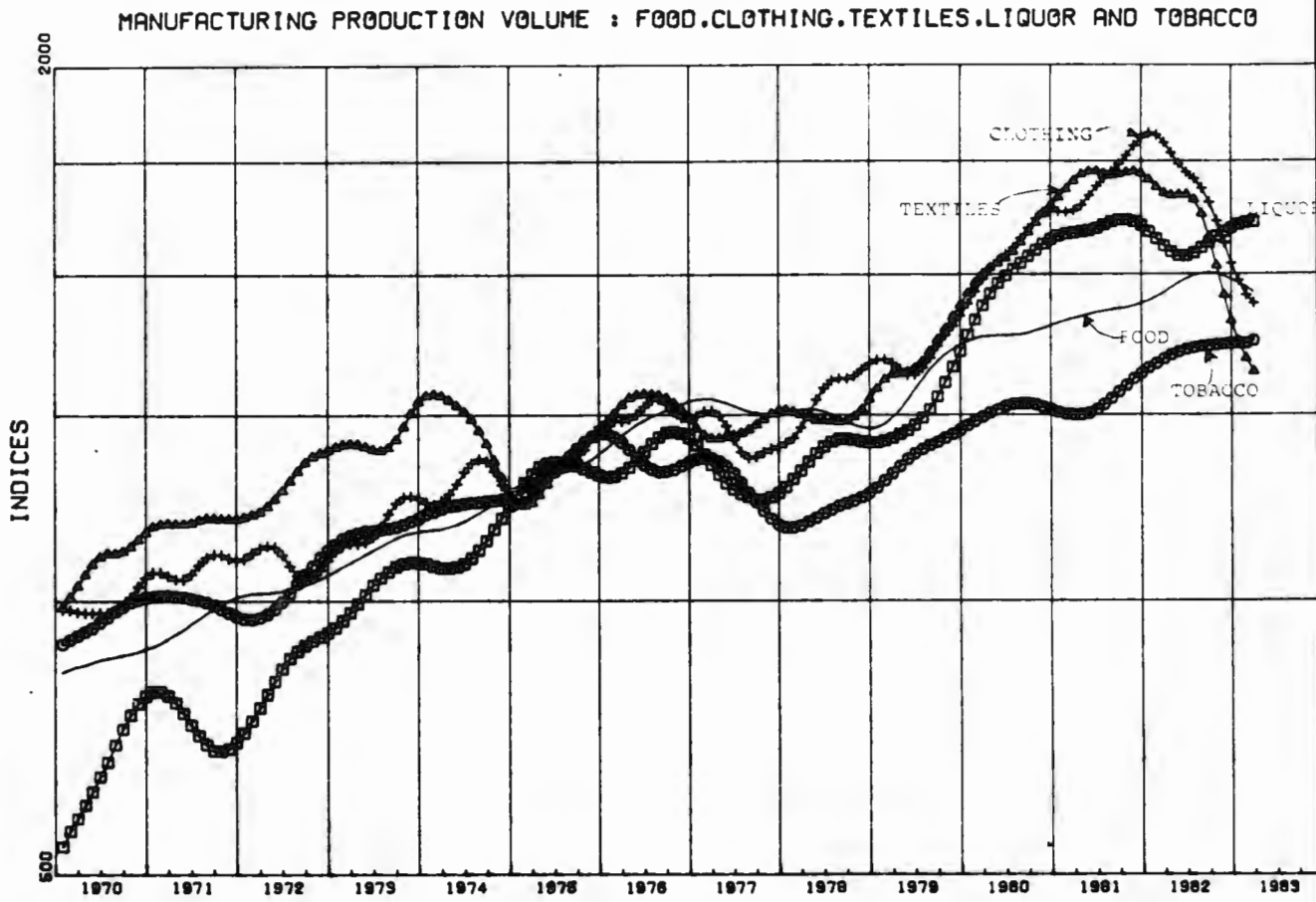


Fig. 4

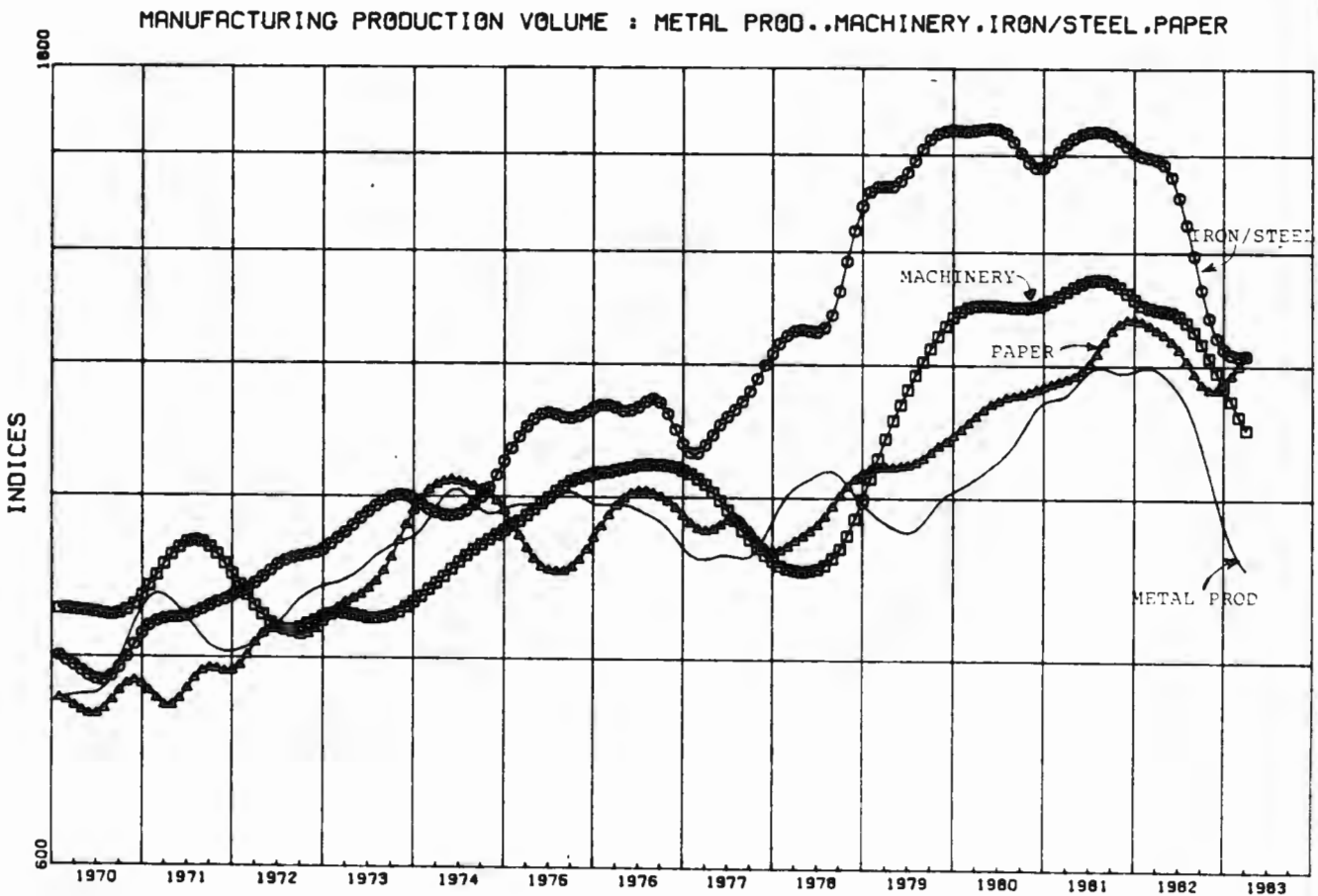
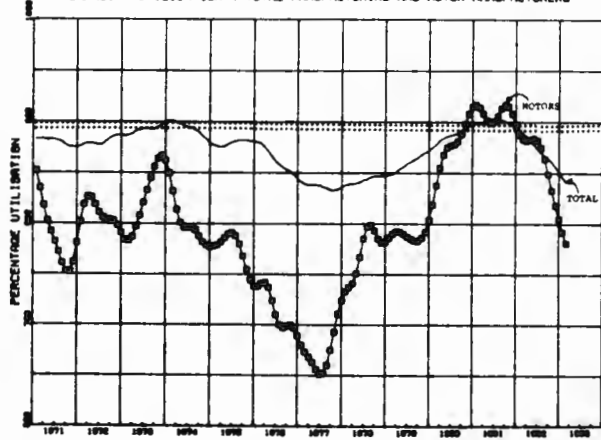


Fig. 5

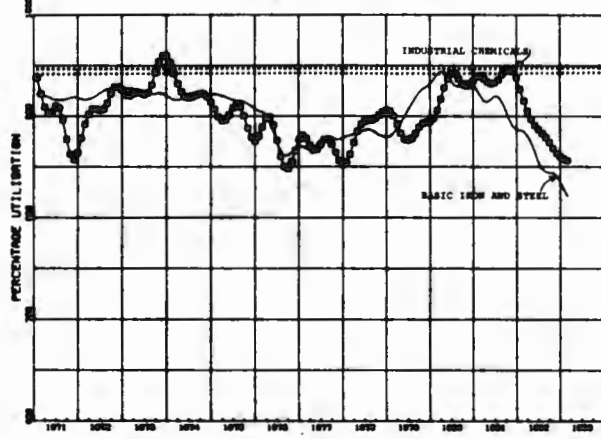
PERCENTAGE CAPACITY UTILISATION - INDUSTRIAL MANUFACTURING SECTORS

----- Probable maximal level of utilisation

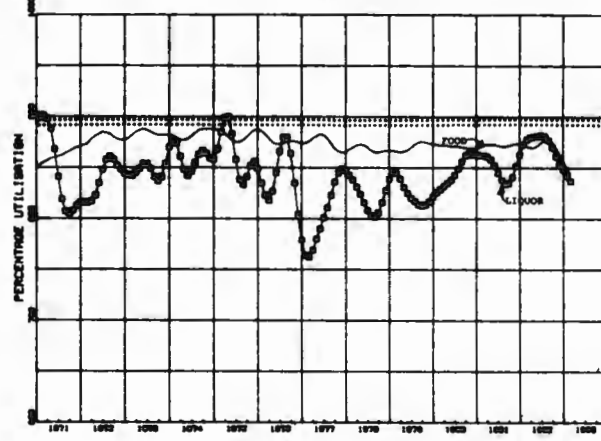
CAPACITY UTILISATION : TOTAL MANUFACTURING AND MOTOR MANUFACTURERS



CAPACITY UTILISATION : BASIC IRON, STEEL AND INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS



CAPACITY UTILISATION : FOOD AND LIQUOR MANUFACTURING



CAPACITY UTILISATION : TEXTILE AND CLOTHING MANUFACTURING

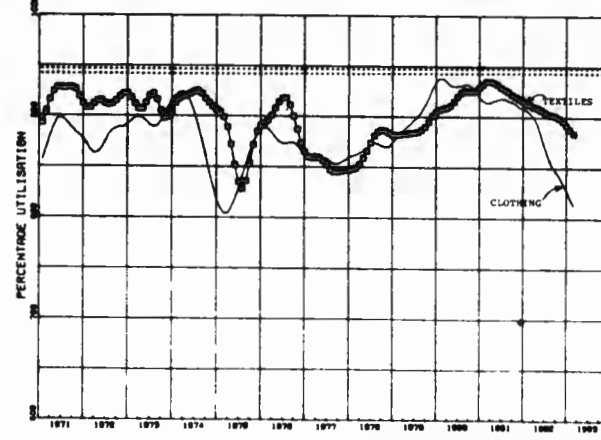


Figure 1 illustrates the business cycle of the South African economy. It is constructed on a Composite Index of Coinciding Indicators which attempts to present the historical turning points of the economy's business cycle. (89) Figure 2 demonstrates that the different industrial regions experienced broadly similar trends in economic fluctuations as indicated by the Regional Economic Activity Levels.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 present the production fluctuations in the manufacturing industry. These fluctuations demonstrate most directly the impact on workers and the unions under consideration in terms of the demand for labour by employers. They also indicate that, although the manufacturing and motor industries as a whole experienced the most severe fall in capacity utilisation in 1976 and 1977, particular manufacturing sectors experienced their slumps at different times. The textile, cotton and paper sectors, for instance, experienced a steep fall in capacity utilisation and production volume in 1974 and 1975, while the machinery industry reached its lowest turning point as late as 1978. The food industry, on the other hand, was virtually unaffected by the severe slump of 1976 and 1977 - capacity utilisation in the industry remained relatively high throughout the 1970s.

On account of the economic recession during the mid-1970s, but also because of long-run structural forces at work in the South African economy a high level of African unemployment existed throughout the 1970s. The next section gives an indication of the extent of the unemployment and of the structural forces that were at work over the period. The consequences of this and other factors on the wage levels of Africans are also considered.

## 2.5 African Unemployment and Wages

Although it is irrefutable that African unemployment existed throughout the 1970s, it is hard to provide an exact measure thereof because of the unreliability and paucity of statistical material available. Several academics made exhaustive statistical studies to try and arrive at a measure of unemployment. (90) Probably the best known and most controversial estimates are the ones done by Charles Simkins. He calculated that total African unemployment increased from 650 000 in 1960 to 850 000 in 1970, rising to 1,9 million by '79. During the first period from 1960 to 1970 the rate of unemployment remained stable at around 11-12% of the African labour force, but rose to 21% in 1979. (91) This rise was mainly due to a fall in the growth rate of national output between the two periods. In the first period it was 5,9%, but dropped to 3,9% in the second. (92)

Most other academics who were engaged in statistical analyses came up with unemployment estimates that were more or less of the same order, although usually somewhat lower, than those of Simkins. In addition to the estimates of the magnitude of African unemployment, Prof. P.J. van der Merwe from the University of Pretoria calculated the increase of African unemployment from 1970 to 1976. He concluded that it had increased by a staggering 107 000 on average every year over this period. (93)

After academics had thoroughly discredited the existing official statistics on African unemployment, the Department of Statistics embarked on a monthly Current Population Survey of African unemployment. The Survey was much more reliable than previous official statistics and used internationally accepted criteria for defining unemployment. A major drawback of the

Survey was its exclusion of African underemployment by only counting Africans who were totally unemployed, i.e. who had worked for less than five hours in the preceding week and had been looking for work during the previous month. (94) Nevertheless, the Current Population Survey found that African unemployment hovered around half a million during 1978 and 1979 and decreased by about 50 000 over the period. (95)

The most fundamental challenge to these findings came from Brian Kantor who argued that the unemployment was voluntary in view of the fact that the real wages of Africans increased during the 1970s. (96) Kantor's assumption that a free labour market existed for Africans was however very unrealistic and his conclusion was in serious discord with the findings of studies of the unemployed based on extensive field work. (97)

The high level of African unemployment was of immense significance for the emerging independent trade unions. It meant that a reserve army of labour was available throughout the period to replace victimised or striking workers who had relatively low levels of skill. Since most of the African working class constituted unskilled and semi-skilled workers it meant that they always took industrial action under the threat that they could be replaced by unskilled workers. Contract workers were in an even more vulnerable position than permanent residents. They ran the risk of not only losing their jobs, but of being sent back to a rural reserve where nothing but poverty faced them and their dependents.

The consequences for the African working class of such high levels of unemployment combined with their lack of education and low occupational skills, were to keep their earnings extremely low. In addition influx control also created a

segmented labour market for Africans. As a result the earnings of the African labour force in 1976 fell into four clearly distinguishable categories: transfer earnings such as pensions which were the lowest at around R150 per annum, rural incomes which were around R300 per annum, mining and service sectors' earnings of about R750 per annum, and manufacturing and other industrialised sectors with incomes of approximately R1500 per annum. (98) It is noteworthy that the independent trade unions were only organising African workers in the highest paid sectors of the economy in the 1970s.

In the manufacturing sector the money wages of Africans more than trebled during the 1970s from R52 per month in 1970 to R187 per month in 1979. In real terms this represented an increase of 49% and rose faster than that of any other population group. Even with the rapid increase African wages were still meagre: in 1979 average African wages in manufacturing still fell below the Supplemented Living Level calculated by the Bureau of Market Research and described as a 'modest low-level standard of living'. (99)

In addition to the economy, the state has also played a crucial role in determining the economic and political position of the African working class in South Africa.

### 3. State Regulation and Control of African Working Class

There are numerous ways in which the state in South Africa has ensured the political and economic subordination of the African working class. The principle ones up to the end of the 1970s were the following:

- it divided the working class by several means which included the granting of full political rights to Whites, and denying them on a differentiated basis to Coloureds, Indians, and

Africans; by creating a division of labour stratified on grounds of colour; and through residential segregation of the different population groups.

- it controlled the movement of members of the African working class and the allocation of their labour by means of influx control laws and the labour bureau system;

- it curtailed and repressed organisations of the working class deemed to be a threat by means of security legislation backed up and implemented by the repressive machinery of the state.

- it introduced an industrial relations system designed to exclude the African working class from collective bargaining and from acquiring negotiating power.

These methods of state regulation, control and intervention in the lives of the African working class are considered below with particular attention being paid to the changing system of industrial relations in South Africa in the 1970s.

### 3.1 Division of the Working Class in South Africa

#### Differential Political Rights

The denial of political rights to Blacks in South Africa has historical and social roots going back to its colonial heritage. Upon the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 these foundations were built on by providing virtually full universal franchise to White males in South Africa and a highly restrictive franchise to Coloured, Indian and African males. Over the next half century the political polarisation was taken to its ultimate extremity by extending universal franchise to all White adults above the age of 18 years and removing all Black representation - Coloured, Indian and African - from parliament, the central legislative body of the country. All Blacks, including the

African working class, were thereby excluded from having any say over the control and allocation of the country's wealth and resources controlled by parliament. They were thereby also denied access to the state and the accompanying leverage which Whites had.

The extension of full political rights to the White working class and its denial to Blacks was one of the principle means through which a fundamental fissure was created in working class solidarity in South Africa. Particularly after the National Party first came to power in 1924, the White working class systematically turned to the state and to political organisations having access to the state, rather than the Black working class, to advance its interests. Frequently the White working class was in fact making use of the state to secure its own class interests at the expense of the Black working class. Class solidarity between the White and Black working classes was thereby made impossible.

But in addition to being built on racial foundations, the South African state was also founded upon a predominantly capitalist mode of production. It therefore also had to provide the infrastructure, laws and economic conditions for capitalist production and capital accumulation to take place. In order to do so it was necessary for the state to ensure the availability of a supply of labour that could meet the skill requirements of an expanding capitalist economy. The state did so by giving a deliberate racial bias to the acquisition of skills of the labour force in favour of Whites against Coloureds, Indians and particularly Africans. By so doing it reinforced the racial cleavage of the working class in South Africa.

## Racial Division of Labour

The racial division of labour in the labour process of South African industry has origins that can be traced far back into the country's history. It was entrenched in a stark form in the mining industry after the discovery of gold in 1884 with immigrant White miners performing skilled and supervisory work while migrant African workers had to do unskilled work.

The industrial colour bar, which can be defined as the ensemble of legal, institutional, social and political forces that retards or blocks the occupational advancement of Blacks, particularly Africans, had its origins in the mining industry. The Mines and Works Act of 1911 as amended in 1926 excluded Africans from specified occupations. (100) The Act remained in operation up to and throughout the 1970s.

Legislation that excluded Africans from more skilled occupations in other industries also came into existence. For instance, the Bantu Building Workers Act of 1951 curtailed the employment of Africans in skilled occupations in the building industry in urban areas other than African townships. (101) The 'job reservation clause', section 77 of the Industrial Conciliation Act introduced in 1956, made explicit provision for the reservation of work for members of different population groups. In 1971 twenty six job reservations preserving certain occupations exclusively for Whites were in force, but the shortage of skilled labour led to a slight relaxation and at the end of 1975 twenty four were in force. (102)

A more hidden yet more pervasive barrier that kept Africans out of skilled occupations was the closed shop agreement practised by industrial councils. It came into operation when the parties to an industrial council agreed that certain occupations, usually the more skilled ones, would only be open to

members of the trade unions belonging to the industrial council. Since African trade unions were prohibited up to 1979 by law from belonging to industrial councils, they were automatically excluded from the occupations specified in the closed shop agreement.

The closed shop practised in industrial council agreements was very pervasive in the 1970s. The Wiehahn Commission found that, from 1976 to 1977, clauses with closed shop provisions were contained in 49 of the 102 industrial council agreements in existence and that 'the employees directly affected by the closed shop provisions number approximately 255 000'. (103) A number of agreements also contained provisions similar to a closed shop clause. For instance, some employers in the leather industry were required to give preference to trade union members in employing workers. (104)

African workers were not only prevented from entering skilled occupations, but also from obtaining the necessary training that would qualify them as more skilled workers such as artisans. The Apprenticeship Act of 1944 made provision for apprenticeship committees in the different industries which could regulate the intake of apprentices. The committees were composed of an equal number of registered trade union and employer association representatives. African trade unions were therefore also excluded from the apprenticeship committees. The White and other registered unions therefore effectively prevented Africans from being apprenticed. The White unions were politically strong enough to prevent even the indenturing of Coloured and Indian artisans in those industries in which White trade union members were employed. (105)

During the 1970s there was a relaxation of the barriers to

apprenticeship for all Blacks because of the shortage of skilled labour. (106) However the policy of the Department of Labour was not to allow the indenturing of Africans as apprentices outside the African 'homelands' and townships. (107) As a result Africans were therefore virtually excluded from apprenticeship training in the 1970s. The number of Africans who took artisan tests went up from a mere 71 in 1975 to 217 in 1978. This still represented only a very small fraction of the total of approximately 10 000 apprentices attaining artisan status over these years. (108) In 1973 the government did however commence with the establishment of pre-service and in-service industrial training centres that trained Africans in basic and lower operational skills. Although relatively large numbers of students enrolled at these centres, the qualifications they obtained were at a lower level than that of artisans. (109)

Another factor that blocked Africans from becoming artisans was that very few of them had obtained even the minimum education necessary to qualify for entry into an apprenticeship.

Even as late as 1970 41% of the African labour force in South Africa had never been to school at all, 44% had been to primary school with almost half receiving only the first four years of education. Only 15% had therefore obtained any education at a secondary school level. (110) During the following ten years the educational level of the African labour force increased only slightly. By 1980 25% of the African labour force had attended secondary school (two-thirds of them for only two years up to standard seven), about 40% had attended primary school and the remaining 35% had never received any formal education. (111) The African labour force was therefore educationally grossly underdeveloped in the 1970s.

This was clearly one of the crucial reasons why the overwhelming proportion of them were employed in the least skilled occupations.

The consequence of the industrial colour bar was to create a racial division of labour in which Whites tended to occupy positions in which they either controlled the labour process or performed the more skilled jobs while Africans tended to be in least skilled positions where their labour power was controlled. These trends were clearly demonstrated by Simkins and Hindson who performed a macro-study of the division of labour during the 1970s in all sectors of the South African economy except agriculture and domestic service. Some of their findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Percentage of Each Population Group in Specific Occupational Categories

Occupation	Whites		Coloureds		Indians		Africans		1979	Total
	1971	1977	1971	1977	1971	1977	1971	1977		
06B	94	91	2	2	3	4	2	3	2	100
08A	58	57	6	8	2	2	34	31	28	100
08B	76	61	7	9	4	4	14	26	21	100
09	69	60	11	13	3	3	17	23	34	100
11	13	9	22	18	8	7	58	67	64	100
12	1	1	8	8	1	2	90	88	89	100
Total	31	29	10	10	4	5	55	56	55	100

Occupational Categories:

- 06B = Senior clerical and white collar technical
- 08A = Blue collar technical
- 08B = Supervisory and inspectional
- 09 = Skilled manual
- 11 = Semi-skilled
- 12 = Unskilled
- Total = All Occupational Categories, not only the six above.

Sources:

Simkins and Hindson, 1979a, Tables IXA - D, pp.30-3;  
Schneier, 1983, Table 2, p.28, for 1979 figures for Africans.

It shows that, in the senior clerical, white and blue collar

technical, supervisory, and skilled manual occupations Whites were proportionately heavily over-represented while in the semi-skilled and unskilled occupations Africans were over-represented. More specifically, Whites constituted no less than 90% of all senior clerical and white collar technical employees during the 1970s. Although Whites constituted a smaller percentage of the blue collar technical employees (around 58%), and Africans made up more or less 30% during the period, Africans were still under-represented in this occupation. There was however a remarkable increase in the proportion of Africans classified in the skilled labour category: their percentage no less than doubled from 17% in 1971 to 34% in 1979. In spite of such a dramatic increase, African workers were still substantially under-represented in this occupational category as well while Whites remained heavily over-represented (even though they were declining as a proportion). Although Africans made up the largest fraction of semi-skilled workers it was particularly Coloured workers who were over-represented in this category. Approximately 20% of semi-skilled employees were Coloured. Indian workers were also over-represented in this category. Finally, African workers constituted the main bulk of unskilled labourers in the 1970s, ranging from 88 to 90 per cent of all unskilled workers over the period.

The division of labour in the industrial sectors of the South African economy thus served to stratify and divide the working class along racial lines. In particular, the concentration of Whites in the skilled and controlling occupations in the labour process and of Blacks in the less skilled occupations with control being exercised over them, considerably strengthened the cleavage between the White working class on the one hand and the Black working class on the other

hand.

### Residential Segregation

Another method through which the state reinforced divisions within the working class was by means of residential segregation. Once again the origins of residential segregation go far back in South African history. As early as 1923 the Natives (Urban Areas) Act laid down that local authorities had to provide segregated residential areas for Africans. But it was the Group Areas Act of 1950 that was more far-reaching and comprehensive than any previous legislation. This Act was instrumental in the upheaval of many Black communities in order to enforce strict segregation of all the population groups.

The physical separation of people into White, Coloured, Indian and African residential areas meant that communities were established which reinforced group identities along the lines of colour or culture or sometimes both. The strong social cohesiveness which living together created was taking place on the basis of colour and culture, thereby weakening the bonds between members of the same class. Furthermore the deprivations which Africans, Coloureds and Indians experienced in their townships was perceived by them as forms of racial discrimination against their population groups, thus reinforcing a group consciousness based on colour rather than class. Finally, the residential segregation of the population groups made it more difficult to organise the working class on a non-racial basis. It was often far easier to organise on a local regional level which meant the exclusion of members of other population groups. All these factors therefore contributed towards the division of the working class on the basis of colour and culture.

To summarise, cleavages in the working class were reinforced by the South African state by extending political rights to Whites while denying it to Blacks, a legally enforced racial division of labour, and residential separation of the different population groups. Another method (discussed extensively below) was a discriminatory industrial relations system which extended the same rights to White, Coloured and Indian workers, but denied them to Africans. While the planes of these cleavages within the working class thus criss-crossed each other in complex ways, a sufficient number of them reinforced each other to create a divided working class in South Africa with the principal cleavage being between White workers on the one side and African, Coloured and Indian on the other.

### 3.2 Influx Control

Another way in which the state has ensured the economic exploitation and political subjugation of the African working class has been through the system of influx control. The system consisted of a number of laws which were armoured and implemented by several bureaucratic and repressive state departments.

The three basic laws on which the enforced influx control of Africans rested in the 1970s were the Black (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 as amended in 1952, the Black Labour Act of 1964, and the Black (Abolition of Passes and Co-ordination of Documents) Act of 1952. The first-mentioned Act divided Africans into different legal categories - those who qualified under sections 10(1)(a), (b) or (c) of the Act to reside permanently in urban areas (the 'prescribed' areas), and those who qualified under section 10(1)(d) to reside temporarily in the urban areas as migrant labourers or commuters. All other Africans were not allowed by law to be in any prescribed area for

more than 72 hours without official sanctioning.

According to official statistics, economically active Africans with permanent residence rights in prescribed areas and on White-owned farms totalled 4,25 million in 1970. This constituted 75% of the total African labour force. Another 20% or 1,17 million of the African labour force were migrant workers and the remaining 5% frontier commuters. (112) As regards the urban African labour force alone, Francis Wilson estimated that approximately 50% of those legally employed were migrant workers in 1968. (113)

The Black Labour Act made provision for the formation of an elaborate system of labour bureaux in prescribed areas as well as the 'homelands'. It compelled all African workseekers to register at labour bureaux. In addition, migrant workers had to have their contracts of employment attested at the labour bureaux in their 'homelands'.

Contrary to its title, the Abolition of Passes Act, as amended in 1957, made it compulsory for all African men and women in South Africa over the age of 16 years to be in possession of a reference book. Any policeman or authorised officer could at any time call upon an African to produce such a reference book in which had to be recorded details of the person's legal status and employer. The reference books therefore constituted the basic means whereby influx control could be enforced.

The extent to which the set of pass laws has been used to enforce influx control is vividly demonstrated by the fact that, since the time of the formation of the Union of South Africa, over 17 million Africans had been arrested and prosecuted under the pass laws and influx control regulations. (114) During the decade under consideration in this thesis, namely 1970-1980, no

less than 4,2 million pass law prosecutions took place. (115)

Historically, influx control, which has roots going back more than two centuries in the country's past, played the principal role of securing and retaining a cheap unskilled African labour force for major sectors of the South African economy. However, during the interwar period another function of influx control gradually started becoming more prominent so that by the 1950s its principal role was to prevent Africans from freely entering and residing permanently in the urban areas. This transformation has been explained by Hindson as follows:

The forces of attraction of capital began to yield to the forces of repulsion, generating a growing surplus population. Prior to the Second World War the dominant objective of state interventions in the area of African administration had been to sever African workers from the means of rural production and drive them to the centres of capitalist production. After the Second World War state interventions were reorientated towards the opposite function, namely to block freed African workers moving to the towns and drive them back to the rural peripheries. (116)

But while the main function of influx control for the state had changed after the war, capital still had a strong vested interest in the retention of the system up to the 1970s. Influx control continued to play the role of providing capital, particularly industries where wages were low and working conditions unpleasant and/or dangerous, with a large supply of cheap migrant labour.

The reasons why the principle role of influx control changed were, on the one hand, the collapse of agricultural sectors of the 'homelands' which had the effect of driving their inhabitants to the metropolitan areas, and, on the other hand, the exclusion

by the state of as many Africans as possible from these metropolitan areas. The exclusion constituted a crucial component in the government's strategy to ensure the continued political subjugation of Africans in South Africa. In a concerted effort by the ruling National Party to make its policy of Separate Development work, it was essential for the state to locate as many Africans as possible in or as close as possible to the Bantustans (subsequently referred to by the state as 'homelands' and then as national states). The other side of the same coin was to keep the number of Africans residing permanently in the metropolitan areas as low as possible. As the crucial instrument which the state used to expel Africans from the urban areas, influx control thus played a pivotal role in the government's policy of denying political rights to Africans in the central legislative and executive bodies of the state. (117).

Influx control also worked against the creation of working class solidarity amongst African workers because it divided them into two distinct social groups. Permanent residents tended to live in family housing whereas migrant workers were crammed together in single-sex compounds and hostels, often in geographically distinct areas. (118) Migrant workers also tended to fill less skilled posts in the labour process. The combination of these factors therefore contributed towards a social division between permanent residents and migrants.

### 3.3 Growing Repressive Powers of the State

The third way in which the South African state had retained the continued subordination of the Black working class in South Africa was by means of repression. During the 1950s and 1960s the repressive legislation enacted by the government to deal with the growing political challenge from the Congress Alliance

expanded immensely. In the 1970s yet more repressive powers were added. Much of the legislation was subsequently used with the intention of destroying, curtailing or harassing the trade union movement. This section concentrates on the major laws and measures that were used to repress progressive unionism in the 1950s and 1960s and which the emerging independent trade unions had to face in the 1970s.

The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 was one of the Acts that was most deliberately aimed at oppressing the progressive trade union movement and was used very extensively to that effect. It was frequently amended during the fifties and sixties, usually to extend the repressive powers conferred on the state authorities. In 1976 its terms were embodied in the Internal Security Act. The principal Act declared The Communist Party of South Africa unlawful, empowered the State President to declare other organisations unlawful and prohibit the publication or dissemination of any publication if, in his opinion, the organisation or publication were promoting any of the aims of communism as defined in the Act.

When an organisation had been declared illegal, the Minister of Justice could direct the liquidator of the organisation to compile a list of persons who were office-bearers or members of the organisation. The Minister could then prohibit listed persons from becoming office-bearers of an organisation of any particular kind specified by him.

The Minister of Justice was also granted the power to place restrictions on the freedom of a listed person or anybody who, in the opinion of the Minister, was furthering the aims of communism. These restrictions imposed on a person, commonly referred to as a banning order, usually included a prohibition

from attending gatherings, confinement to a particular magisterial district, prevention from performing any specified act, and reporting at stated intervals at a police station. (119)

Many of the banning orders served prohibited the banned person from performing the following acts:

- (a) from entering any group area or African township;
- (b) from entering any factory, mine premises, railway premises or harbours, hospital, premises where a publication was produced;
- (c) from giving any form of educational instruction. (120)

The Suppression of Communism Act was used by the state to undermine what remained of CNETU yet further in the early 1950s as well as SACTU's organisation inside South Africa in the early 1960s. By 1956 seventy five trade unionists had been placed on the liquidator's list. Of these, 56 had been forced to resign from their trade unions. (121) SACTU was equally hard hit and by early 1964 more than 50 of its prominent members had been served with banning orders which made it impossible for them to continue organising in trade unions. (122)

During the 1970s the state repeatedly imposed banning orders on officials in the independent trade union movement in attempts to squash the unions, but without success.

The repressive power of the state to detain people without bringing them to trial grew alarmingly during the 1960s. At the beginning of 1961, as various Black groups planned demonstrations and a stay-at-home in support of a call for a national convention, the Criminal Procedure Act was amended to prevent the release on bail of anyone arrested until twelve days after arrest. In 1962, a time when there were numerous acts of sabotage in the country, the General Law Amendment Act or 'Sabotage Act' was passed. (123) The following year it was amended to allow a commissioned officer of the police to arrest

without warrant a person suspected of committing or intending to commit sabotage. Such a person could be detained in solitary confinement for interrogation for a period of up to 90 days, but a person could be re-detained upon expiry of the period for another 90 days, and this process could be repeated. In 1965 the state's powers of detention were widened to allow for the arrest and detention of potential state witnesses for a period up to 180 days. As in the case of 90 day detention no court of law was given jurisdiction to order the release of a detained person.

The Terrorism Act of 1967 however placed unbridled repressive powers in the hands of the police. It was enacted after the guerilla warfare campaign of the banned national movements was making itself felt. Section 6 of the Act empowered the police to arrest without warrant a person suspected of being a guerilla or withholding from the police information relating to guerilla fighters. Such a person could be detained for interrogation for an unlimited period. Nobody other than officers of the state were allowed access to the detainee. In passing the legislation the Minister of Justice gave the impression that these unrestricted powers were only to be used against guerilla movements in terrains or under conditions that required drastic measures. (124) However, Section 6 was subsequently used to detain trade unionists in solitary confinement where they were subjected to harsh and prolonged security police interrogation. These powers of detention were also used on occasion against members of the independent trade unions in the 1970s.

In 1976 yet another form of imprisonment without trial was introduced. Section 10 of the Internal Security Amendment Act made provision for the Minister to detain any person in custody

in a prison for a period of up to twelve months if he was satisfied that the person was engaging in activities which endangered the security of the state or the maintenance of public order. (125) This provision was also used against the independent trade unions in the 1970s.

Another area in which the burgeoning repressive legislation disrupted and stifled trade union organisation was in the prohibition of meetings, a vital component of worker mobilisation for unions. The main law through which this was achieved was the Riotous Assemblies Act which was first passed in 1914 and re-enacted in 1956. It empowered the Minister of Justice to prohibit public gatherings in public places in the open air if he considered that these might seriously endanger the public peace or might cause feelings of hostility between Whites and Blacks. The powers of the state to prohibit gatherings were extended over the following years by amending the Riotous Assemblies Act. In 1961 it was also made an offence to encourage or try and coerce people into attending a prohibited meeting. In 1974 all types of gatherings of any number of persons, not only public gatherings of twelve or more people, could be forbidden.

The powers of magistrates were increased under the 1974 amendment. A magistrate could, without recourse to the Minister of Justice, prohibit any kind of gathering everywhere in his district for a period not exceeding 48 hours if he had reason to believe that the public peace was seriously threatened. But the Minister's powers became pretty well all-encompassing. The Minister could prohibit any kind of gathering anywhere or everywhere in the Republic for any period if he deemed such action to be necessary for the maintenance of public peace or to prevent feelings of hostility from being engendered between Whites and Blacks. (126)

In addition to repression as a way of subjugating the Black working class, the state has also used co-option of working class organisations. This strategy has been applied in the field of industrial relations to Coloured and Indian trade unions. However, during the 1970s forces were at work that eventually compelled the state to make major concessions to Africans in the industrial relations system. Because of their immense importance to the independent trade unions, the changes in the industrial relations system during this period are examined in considerable detail in the next section.

#### **4. The Changing System of Industrial Relations in the 1970s**

##### **4.1 The Industrial Relations System in the Early 1970s**

At the start of the 1970s South Africa's formal industrial relations system was dualistic and discriminatory: one system extended collective bargaining rights to White, Coloured and Indian workers, while the other system denied it to African workers. As early as 1924 the Industrial Conciliation Act was passed which enabled White, Coloured and Indian workers to establish registered trade unions.

Registered unions could make use of the principle collective bargaining institution provided by the Industrial Conciliation Act. Along with employers' associations registered unions could form industrial councils in a particular industry and region if they were deemed to be sufficiently representative by the Minister of Labour. An equal number of union and employer representatives served on an industrial council which negotiated an agreement on statutory minimum wages and substantive rules with regards to working conditions. The Act enabled the Minister to extend the agreement to the whole industry and region, so that even non-parties to the industrial council were

also subject to its terms and conditions. This was usually done in order to prevent competitors from undercutting parties to the industrial council.

In 1973 there were 103 industrial councils in existence. Their agreements covered 197 000 White, 213 000 Coloured, 60 000 Asian, and 528 000 African workers, a total of 998 000 workers in all. (127) Thus although African workers were not represented on the industrial councils, they nonetheless constituted the majority of workers whose wage levels were determined by the councils. This helps to explain why these levels were very low: in 1973 the median for unskilled workers was less than 20% that of artisans' median minimum wage level. (128)

Instead of trade union rights, the state provided African workers with plant-based statutory works committees under the Native (later Bantu) Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953. When the Act was passed in 1953 the Minister of Labour said in parliament that, if these provisions were 'effective and successful',

the Natives will have no interest in trade unions,  
and trade unions will probably die a natural death'.  
(129)

But instead, African workers showed no interest in statutory works committees. By January 1973, when the Durban strike wave broke out (which is considered below) there were a mere 24 statutory works committees in existence. (130)

The right to strike for African workers was also totally prohibited by the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act. An amendment to the Act in 1973 did away with the total prohibition of strikes by African workers. It made strikes legal under certain very restricted conditions (discussed below) similar to those that applied to White, Coloured and Indian workers under

the Industrial Conciliation Act.

However, throughout the 1970s the legal right to strike in South Africa was meaningless because workers who went on a legal strike could be dismissed by management on the grounds that they had broken their contract of service under common law. (131) This interpretation of the law was based on a Supreme Court case in which the judge had to rule whether an employer was entitled to terminate the jobs of employees refusing to work during a strike that was lawful under the Industrial Conciliation Act. He ruled that

All that the Act has done is to declare that striking in certain circumstances constitutes a criminal offence. If these circumstances are not present, then no criminal offence is committed and in that limited sense, the strike is legal. It does not follow that an employer is deprived of his common law right to dismiss an employee who refuses to work. (132)

African and other workers were therefore without any legal protection during the 1970s if they chose to use the strike weapon.

#### 4.2 The Durban Strikes of 1973 and the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Amendment Act

After the destruction of SACTU in the early 1960s an uneasy calm settled into industrial relations in South Africa. Strikes almost totally receded for the remainder of the decade and into the start of the 1970s. The first significant sign of African worker discontent came from Namibia (South West Africa) in December 1971 when 13500 African workers went on strike against the contract labour system. (133) The following year isolated strikes started taking place in South Africa. The most notable were a sit-in strike in by African bus drivers employed by the Public Utility Transport Corporation (PUTCO) on the Rand in June as well as a strike by Durban dockworkers in November. (134) Both these strikes were in demand of higher wages.

The industrial calm was totally shattered in January and February 1973 when a strike wave hit Durban and extended to other parts of Natal. Between 61 000 and 100 000 African workers and an unspecified but much smaller number of Indian workers went on strike primarily in demand of higher wages. (135) But the impact of the Durban strikes reverberated far beyond wage demands and sparked off fundamental changes in industrial relations throughout the remainder of the 1970s. As a result of the strikes African workers in Durban avidly joined trade unions that emerged soon after the strikes and African unions grew rapidly in number and size. During this period, and even earlier, African worker organisations were also emerging in other major industrial centres.

Management however soon went on a counter-attack against the emerging African unions. They were strongly assisted in this by the state. The state's assistance to management against the independent African trade unions in the early and mid-seventies, took on four main forms: legislation to assist management to try to undermine African trade unions; the adoption of policies and practices by the Labour Department that were specifically aimed against the advancement of African unions; harassment of union leaders and members by the Security Police; and outright repression of the unions by banning their leaders.

In response to the Durban strikes, the government amended the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953 to try and meet the challenge from emerging African trade unions. The Act was renamed the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act. The 1973 Amendment to the Act introduced company-based liaison committees and revised the provisions regarding the establishment and functions of the works committees. A liaison committee could

be established at the initiative of an employer in any concern employing African workers. At least half the members of the committee were to be elected by the African employees while the remaining members were to be appointed by the employer who could also appoint the chairman of the committee. The functions of the liaison committee were

to consider matters which are of mutual interest to the employer and his employees and to make to the employer such recommendations concerning conditions of employment of such employees or any other matter affecting their interests.(136)

Liaison committees were therefore powerless advisory bodies: employees on the committees were not granted statutory bargaining powers which would enable them to negotiate agreements on wages and working conditions with their employers. At best they could only make recommendations to their employers about their working conditions.

Works committees contained more potential for African workers, although they were also limited to being company-based, and not industrial bodies. They were also commensurately harder to establish. The entire works committee was to be elected by African employees, but could only be established in enterprises where no liaison committee existed. (The converse did not apply to liaison committees.) Unless an employer wished to establish a works committee of his own volition, a majority of the African employees in the establishment had to inform the employer that they wished to elect a works committee. It was then up to the employer to convene a meeting of his African employees where they could proceed to elect a works committee. The meeting also had to take place under the chairmanship of the employer. A considerable amount of control over the formation of a works committee was therefore placed in the hands of the employer.

However, because works committees were elected entirely by

the African employees, they could be seen as representative bodies of the workers. The Amendment also made provision for members of the committee to be re-elected after periods ranging from one to two years thereby helping to ensure that the committee members still had the confidence of the African employees.

The functions of a works committee were

to communicate the wishes, aspirations and requirements of the employees in the establishment... to their employer and to represent the said employees in any negotiations with their employer concerning their conditions of employment or any other matter affecting their interests. (137)

Compared to liaison committees, works committees were at least granted the statutory right to negotiate with their employers about their conditions of employment. However the Amendment did not explicitly state that wages could be negotiated (although they could), nor did it grant agreements reached through such negotiations any statutory power. The Amendment also created an anomaly in that it did not specify how agreements reached through works committee negotiations were to be reconciled with Industrial Council Agreements which could cover African workers represented by a works committee. This indicated that the government probably did not intend the works committees to negotiate binding agreements with their employers.

The Amendment extended some rights, albeit very limited ones, to African workers. It strengthened the provisions that prohibited victimisation of African workers participating in the establishment or activities of liaison committees or works committees. Whereas the 1953 Act prohibited all strikes by African workers, the provisions of the 1973 Amendment legalised strikes or lock-outs under certain very limited conditions. A strike could still not take place legally where a wage

determination by the Wage Board or an order was binding and where it has been in operation for less than one year; during the period of currency of an agreement, award or determination made under the Industrial Conciliation Act; in certain industries deemed to be of strategic significance by the Minister of Labour; and when an unresolved dispute had been reported to the Minister for a Wage Board recommendation. In other instances a strike or lock-out could legally take place provided thirty days had elapsed since an unresolved dispute had been reported to a Bantu Labour officer in the area concerned. (138) Given the fact that 840 160 African workers were covered by agreements, awards or determinations in April 1973, the legal right to strike was severely curtailed for many African workers. (139) In any case, as had been pointed out above, the legality of a strike did not protect any strikers from being dismissed.

#### 4.3 The Managerial and State Counter-Offensive 1973-1976

Management was quick to make use of the new legislation in their counter-offensive against the African unions that were emerging throughout the country's major industrial centres. With the support and assistance of the Department of Labour they engaged in a drive to establish liaison committees in their enterprises in order to try and prevent African unions from taking root in their factories. As a result liaison committees increased rapidly over the following five years as Table 4 below indicates.

Table 4

## Number of Liaison Committees and Works Committees 1973-77

As at 31 December	Liaison Committees	Works Committees
1973	773	125
1974	1 482	207
1975	2 042	287
1976	2 382	299
1977	2 503	301

Source: SAIRR 1973:302

During the first three years of the Amendment Act's existence no less than 2042 liaison committees were established. Thereafter the rate of formation of liaison committees slowed down, but still kept up a high enough pace to ensure that 2 503 liaison committees existed at the end of 1977. In some cases employers took the initiative in forming works committees, but many of the 301 works committees established up to 1977 were due to the initiatives of the emerging African worker organisations.

The most disruptive counter-offensive against African trade unions by the state took place soon after a new wave of strikes had broken out in Durban in January 1974. Four of the White organisers in TUACC were banned for a period of five years under the Suppression of Communism Act. The bannings imposed restrictions on the four trade unionists that prevented them from carrying on with their trade union work.

In spite of the disruption and intimidatory effects of the bannings and the hostile attitude of management to African trade unions, they carried on organising African workers. Then, in November 1976 the state administered its most severe blow to the emerging independent trade unions yet by banning no less than 24 people directly or indirectly associated with the unions. Amongst the banned people were some of the most prominent leaders and organisers of the independent unions in Natal, the Western

Cape and on the Witwatersrand. (139) The bannings appeared to be an attempt by the state to administer such a severe blow to the independent union movement that it would collapse. The unions however had sufficient resources, resilience and experience to survive the onslaught and carried on organising and consolidating their positions during 1977.

The state complemented its repressive action with a co-optive strategy by endeavouring to make the liaison committee system more palatable to African workers by amending the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Amendment Act in 1977. Whereas before liaison committees could only make recommendations to management, they were now given the power

to negotiate and enter into agreements with the employer in relation to the wages or the conditions of employment of the employees concerned...(140)

Provision was also made for the establishment of more than one liaison committee in any enterprise by setting up liaison committees in different sections. Liaison committees in one enterprise could be linked together by a co-ordinating liaison committee that would assume the role of negotiating with management. Although works committees could co-exist with liaison committees in the same enterprise, the works committees retained an inferior position as only the liaison committees would then be entitled to negotiate an agreement with management.

These attempts to improve the stature or bargaining power of liaison committees however proved fruitless and futile. By 1979 no evidence could be found that a single agreement had been negotiated by a liaison committee or co-ordinating liaison committee with management. (141)

The Durban strikes of 1973 followed by an unprecedented high level of industrial conflict since 1960, the political turmoil sparked off round many parts of the country by the Soweto student

revolt, as well as other forces at work (see below), put pressure on the state to reform the industrial relations system. As a result it appointed a Commission of Inquiry into Labour Legislation under the chairmanship of professor Nicholas Wiehahn in June 1977. The terms of reference of the Commission were to make recommendations on legislation regarding labour relations and the utilisation of labour for laws administered by the Departments of Labour and Mines. Two months later a complementary Commission of Inquiry into Legislation affecting the Utilisation of Manpower was appointed with dr. P.J.Riekert as its sole member. This Commission was required to examine the regulation and utilisation of African labour by other Departments, particularly the Departments of Plural Relations and Development, and of Education and Training.

#### 4.4 The Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions

##### Reasons for Appointment of Commissions in 1977

The most important reasons why the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions were appointed were the high levels of industrial and political conflict in the country that erupted in the 1970s, the re-emergence of African trade unions, the shortages of skilled manpower that became apparent during the boom of the 1960s and threatened to put a stranglehold on economic growth, and international pressure against racial discrimination in South Africa with the possibility that it could disrupt investment and trade with South Africa.

Industrial disputes in the 1970s, commencing with the Durban strikes in 1973, were at an unprecedented high compared with the previous decade. Whereas in the ten years preceding 1973 the number of Africans involved in industrial disputes never rose above 10 000, the number involved in industrial disputes between

1973 and 1976 never fell below 30 000 with a peak of 100 000 reached in 1973. (142)

In addition to industrial disputes there were also stay-aways by Blacks in 1976 that were last seen in 1961. The Soweto student uprising led the Soweto Student Representative Council to call four stay-aways between August and November 1976. These stay-aways were in the nature of political demonstration stoppages rather than strikes. (143) Three of the stay-aways gained support from workers and lasted two to three days each. In the first stay-away Johannesburg firms reported an absenteeism of 50-60% and in the second one the rate of absenteeism went up to between 70 and 80%. The third stay-away was the largest demonstration stoppage since the Second World War and spread to the Reef as well as the Cape Peninsula where Coloured workers joined in. At least half a million workers stayed away. In Johannesburg 300 000 did so and in the Cape Peninsula 200 000. (144)

It was thus an urgent task of the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions to propose solutions that would put an end to such uninstitutionalised and unpredictable outbursts of conflict in the society.

Another major issue for the state was the re-emergence and growth of African trade unions in the 1970s. An aspect that worried the state was the potential of the unions to mobilise African workers to make broader political demands. The Wiehahn Commission expressed the concern that the unions could form alliances with other political organisations and use its growing muscle power to make political demands. The sympathy and financial support that the independent unions were receiving from the international trade union movement also perturbed the

Commission. (145)

It came to two conclusions about the emerging independent unions.

The first is that Black trade unions, not being registered and therefore being outside the statutory industrial relations system, could well bring extreme stress to bear on the existing statutory system... The second conclusion is that a very real danger exists that this development is in the process of creating, by precedent, an informal system which it might in the long run not be possible to dismantle or restructure even if registration were to be permitted at a later stage. (Wiehahn Commission, 1979:19, para. 3.35.14)

The high growth rate of the economy during the 1960s that was more or less sustained up to 1974 stretched the country's supply of skilled manpower beyond its limits. The Wiehahn Commission also noted that there was a

general concern in economic circles that, in the event of a continued upswing in the South African economy, serious shortages of skilled labour will result and that these shortages could become a distinct threat to the rate of recovery and the maintenance of a satisfactory rate of economic growth. (146)

Concern on the part of the state about the shortage of skilled labour was also expressed by the Minister of Labour in 1978 when he predicted that there would be a shortage of 180 000 technical and professional workers and 758 000 skilled and semi-skilled workers by 1990. (147) This was a matter of great concern to the government since it required a strong economy to ensure that the resources were available to maintain White political domination. According to Simkins, the high growth rate of 5,3% per annum was required to prevent the rate of African unemployment from increasing yet further. (148) The state could not afford to let African unemployment rise too high because of the political risks involved. In particular, the rising expectations of young educated Africans in the townships was a matter of grave concern to the Wiehahn Commission and, presumably, to the Riekert Commission as well. (149)

On the other hand one of the main obstacles to sustaining a high economic growth rate was the industrial colour bar that prevented African workers from acquiring skills. As was explained above, the registered unions, especially the White registered unions, were instrumental in barring African workers from acquiring training as artisans and entering skilled occupations. (150) Since a central assignment of both the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions was to eliminate the bottlenecks that stood in the way of the acquisition of skills by African workers, (151) this was yet another reason why the question of African trade union registration would have concerned the Wiehahn Commission.

Another factor that accounted for the appointment of the Commissions was the growing international pressure against racial discrimination in the country. The changing structure of the economy during the 1960s gave many multinational corporations prominent positions in the South African economy and therefore made them ready targets for demands of disinvestment from pressure groups concerned about racism and exploitation in South Africa. In response to the disinvestment lobbies, which included such important bodies as the International Labour Organisation, the parent companies and countries drew up Codes of Conduct such as the Sullivan Code and European Economic Community (EEC) Codes. The aims of these Codes were to lay down guidelines for behaviour of the multinational corporations that would exonerate them from the accusation that they were practising racial discrimination or paying wages below the poverty datum line. These Codes were not enough to placate the disinvestment lobbies and thus there was a need for the South African state to respond. (152)

There was not only a potential threat of disinvestment in South Africa, but also of a boycott of trade with South Africa.

An example of such pressure that could still have been fresh in the government's mind was the boycott of South African coal in 1974 by American dock workers on the grounds that it was produced under indentured labour conditions. The boycott had the effect of leading to the speedy withdrawal of the penal provisions of the Masters and Servants legislation by the government. (153) The appointment of the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions could be thus also responses to these international pressures.

#### Recommendations of the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions, 1979

The first part of the Wiehahn Commission was released on May Day, 1979. The Commission had however judiciously leaked many of its recommendations beforehand so that its major findings did not come as a surprise. In fact, a strike by White mineworkers in March 1979 was in all probability aimed as a warning to the Wiehahn Commission and the government not to undermine job reservation and other privileges enjoyed by White mineworkers. (154) The Riekert Commission was completed earlier in August 1978, but was made public about the same time the Wiehahn Commission was released.

The Wiehahn Commission paid attention to the lack of state control over the emerging African trade unions, the racially discriminatory provisions in the industrial relations legislation and the measures that prevented Africans from acquiring training and access to skilled occupations. The Commission was concerned that the unregistered African unions

enjoy much greater freedom than registered unions, to the extent that they are free if they so wished to participate in politics and to utilise their funds for whatever purposes they see fit. (155)

Registered unions, on the other hand, had to comply with administrative regulations specified by the state. These

included keeping audited accounts, membership registers, and their constitutions had to comply with provisions specified in the Industrial Conciliation Act. They were also prohibited from affiliating to any political party, and from granting financial assistance to a political party or a candidate for election to parliament, provincial council or local authority. (156)

In order to try and bring the African unions under state regulation and control, the Commission recommended that they should be allowed to register. Registration should be voluntary and unregistered unions should not be declared illegal as this would drive them underground and turn African workers against the capitalist system. (157)

Racially discriminatory measures were to be removed from the labour laws by allowing unions to be open to members of all population groups and introducing a unitary system of industrial relations, the Commission recommended. In order to do so, the industrial council system as well as the plant-based committee system were to be retained, but on a non-racial basis. The liaison committees were to be renamed works councils and their membership be opened to all population groups. The industrial council system was however to be given predominance over the committee system. (158) Implicit in the recommendations of the Commission was the notion that trade unions would negotiate at the national or regional level on industrial councils, and that works councils, not trade unions, would function at the plant levels.

The Commission had to bear in mind the risk of a White backlash against its findings. It therefore recommended that any of the existing parties to an industrial council could veto the admission of an African union to the council.

Addressing itself to the bottlenecks that prevented Blacks

from acquiring skills and skilled occupations, the Wiehahn Commission recommended that the principle of statutory work reservation should be abolished by the immediate removal of Section 77 of the Industrial Conciliation Act. However the realities of power in White politics prevented the Commission from applying the principle consistently. Job reservation in the mines was retained and the Commission recommended that the closed shop practice should be retained even though five of the Commissioners expressed themselves strongly against the decision. They wrote

The closed shop is a means of restricting skills training at a time of dire need of such skills, and of limiting entry to the skilled trades - be it for motives of enhancing the market value of union members by creating artificial shortages or for reasons of sectional interests on the part of a particular population group. (159)

The Wiehahn Commission also recommended the establishment of an Industrial Court that would interpret labour laws and adjudicate on industrial relations issues such as unfair labour practices. It would build up a body of case law and be accessible to all persons and organisations. The costs of litigation should be kept as low as possible. (160) The Commission furthermore recommended the establishment of a National Manpower Commission that would continuously monitor developments in the labour field.

The Riekert Commission focused mainly on trying to improve the living and working conditions of Africans with permanent residence rights in the prescribed areas (the Insiders). To this end the Commission made a number of recommendations aimed at increasing the occupational and regional mobility of the Insiders as well as improving their opportunity of leading a family life and having a house to live in. Recommendations were also made

to facilitate the creation of an African middle class from amongst the permanent residents.

However the recommended improvements in the living standards of the Insiders were to take place at the cost of the Outsiders who did not have these rights, i.e. commuters, migrant workers and farm labourers. The primary method whereby this was to be achieved was to keep the Outsiders out of settling in the cities and towns by tightening up the system of influx control. Preference for employment thus always had to be given to permanent residents and Riekert was particularly concerned about the employment of Africans who did not have legal rights to be in urban areas. Because he found such employment to take place on a large scale, the Commissioner recommended that employers hiring 'illegal' workers should be made to pay increased fines and that the penalties should be strictly enforced.

In line with these recommendations the government amended the legislation in the same year to increase the penalty for employers employing Africans not legally in an urban area to a maximum of R500 for a first conviction, and for second and subsequent convictions to a minimum of R500. (161)

The Riekert Commission was thus aimed at creating a deep division between urban Africans with permanent residence rights, and rural-based Africans who, either with or without a contract, came to work in the cities. By giving preference to permanent residents in employment and housing, the burden of unemployment and poverty would fall on the outsiders who were all to be located in the rural areas.

An observer with extensive knowledge about the operation of influx control summarised the implications of the Riekert Commission as follows:

The Riekert Report is a very clever and highly

sophisticated piece of work which will probably result in a longer period in which the status quo will be maintained through the creation of a relatively small African privileged group which may serve as a buffer against unrest. In the interim, dreadful human suffering in the homelands, and problems experienced by migrant and non-permanent workers will increase. (162)

For African trade unions these proposals contained the threat that the African working class could become divided between permanent urban residents and temporary contract workers. The permanent residents would occupy the more skilled occupations and become more stabilised while the rural migrants and commuters would be in temporary less skilled jobs with lower wages.

#### 4.5 The Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act of 1979

The government cautiously accepted the major recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission. It consequently amended the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1979 to incorporate the recommendations in part. Nonetheless the amendments heralded a most significant change in the state's approach to African trade unions because, for the first time in the country's history, Africans were allowed to belong to registered trade unions and participate in the central industrial relations machinery. The African trade unions were thus granted recognition and some legal rights by the state. Although the state's intention was to try and co-opt the growing independent trade union movement, it was also forced to make some legal and political concessions to African working class organisations.

The Industrial Conciliation Act was amended to extend the definition of employee to include African workers with permanent urban resident rights. Thus contract workers, commuters and foreign Africans were excluded and could therefore not belong to registered unions. (163) After substantial criticism from the trade union movement across the board, and probably realising the

unfeasibility of the provision, the Minister, on 28 September 1979, extended the definition of employee to include all Africans except foreign workers from internationally recognised countries. (164) Provision was also made for the provisional registration of unions, but unions displayed no interest in it and the provision was repealed in 1981.

Although this measure was a great stride for the government, it did not accept the Wiehahn recommendations in full. Trade unions could not freely open their membership to all population groups, but were still required to be uni-racial. Registration to mixed unions would however still be granted where the number of employees of any population group was too small to enable them to form an effective separate union or where the Minister deemed it expedient. (165) The Black Labour Relations Regulation Act was also left in tact which meant that a separate committee system still existed for African workers.

The fear existed that African trade unions would register and then dominate industrial councils also existed in the government's mind. It therefore accepted the Wiehahn Commission's proposal to grant existing parties to industrial councils the right to veto membership of African unions. No additional trade unions would henceforth be admitted to an industrial council unless all the parties to an industrial council had agreed to their admission in writing. (166)

In accordance with the need to remove bottlenecks on the utilisation of manpower and remove racial discrimination from labour laws, the 'job reservation' clause, section 77 of the Industrial Conciliation Act, was repealed.

The two other important provisions of the Amendment Act were the establishment of an Industrial Court and National Manpower

Commission. The Industrial Court was granted jurisdiction to adjudicate on any matter arising out of the application of the provisions of the laws administered by the Department of Labour. The Court was given a significant new power in that it would deliberate on a new type of dispute, the unfair labour practice. It was left up to the Court to decide what it considered to be an unfair labour practice. The Minister could also order an employer to restore the status quo in the case of an unfair labour practice until the Industrial Court had given a ruling on the dispute. Contrary to a Wiehahn Commission proposal, no provision was made in the Act for a right of appeal from the Industrial Court to the Supreme Court. (167)

The National Manpower Commission was appointed to do a continual survey and analysis on a broad front of labour issues including the efficacy of labour legislation, manpower needs and the international labour front. It would submit its findings and recommendations directly to the Minister of Labour.

#### 4.6 Developments After the Wiehahn Commission and the Labour Relations Amendment Act of 1981

Contrary to the expectations of both the Wiehahn Commission and the government, the independent African trade unions did not rush into registration. At first much of the independent unions' hostility against registration was aimed at the exclusion of migrant workers and commuters from registered unions, but after these workers had been granted Ministerial exemption to belong to registered unions, more fundamental objections to registration from some of the independent unions came to the fore.

The strongest and most clearly articulated opposition against registration came from the Western Province General Workers' Union. The union's fundamental argument against

registration was that it would mean a loss of workers' control of their union. It was joined in this stance by other unions, especially the more community based unions such as the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU) that started growing rapidly in East London in 1980. But not all the independent unions were opposed to registration. The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) adopted a different approach and weighed up the pros and cons of registration. It came down in favour of registration provided its affiliate unions could register non-racially and maintain their policy of shop-floor bargaining. The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions (which became Council of Unions of South Africa in 1980) decided to register after deliberating on the matter for some time.

Further developments took place that also served to undermine the government's labour reform plans. The unregistered unions grew very rapidly during 1980 and also succeeded in gaining recognition from employers in industrial sectors such as harbour transport, motor assembly and engineering. These achievements were not restricted to unregistered unions. Independent unions that registered also grew rapidly after 1979 and similarly signed recognition agreements with employers. The most significant aspect was that companies which were parties to industrial councils signed agreements giving the unions the right to plant-based negotiation with the employers. Equally pathbreaking was the fact that the Federated Chamber of Industries and a giant corporation, Barlow Rand, released statements to the effect that their companies would be prepared to negotiate with representative unions regardless of whether they were registered or not. (168)

Worker militancy also started to increase sharply after

1979. The number of workers involved in strikes in 1980 shot up to 61 785, almost three times higher than the previous year's figure. In 1981 the trend continued as 92 842 workers went on strike either to defend their falling real wages eroded by inflation or to challenge arbitrary managerial control. (169) A new aspect of the strikes after 1979 was that some of them were trials of strength rather than demonstration stoppages as was the tendency before. The strikers could rely on community support which came in the form of financial assistance and consumer boycotts.

In the light of these developments, the government decided to amend the Industrial Conciliation Act in order to try and make its policy of control through reform more effective. (170) It amended the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1981 and changed the name thereof to the Labour Relations Act. The name of the former Department of Labour, which was changed to Department of Manpower Utilization in 1979, was shortened to the Department of Manpower.

The amendments of 1981 to the Labour Relations Act were to some extent a continuation of the reforms proposed by the Wiehahn Commission. In certain respects it completed the reforms commenced in 1979. The most notable of these were the introduction of a unified system of industrial relations by repealing the Black Labour Relations Regulation Act and removing all overt racial discrimination from the Labour Relations Act. The exclusively African works and liaison committees were replaced by works councils open to all population groups. The functions of the councils were not specified in the Act, but in structure they were similar to liaison committees with management constituting up to half of a council's representatives. (171)

But the Amendment Act's main provisions were aimed at

extending the state's control over unregistered trade unions and trade union federations as well as tightening up the existing controls on trade unions. Most of the existing administrative controls and restrictions on registered trade unions' activities were extended to unregistered trade unions, and new restrictions were imposed on both registered and unregistered unions. All unions, whether registered or not, were required by the amendment to submit to the Industrial Registrar annually the number of paid up and signed up members as well as audited financial statements. The names and addresses of officials and office bearers also had to be submitted to the Registrar. (172)

The most serious restrictions imposed on unregistered unions were in connection with political activities and strikes. The existing prohibitions on the political activities on registered unions were extended to unregistered unions. In addition

The restricted political activities have been extended beyond affiliation and financial assistance so as to include all activities aimed at influencing members with the object of giving assistance to political parties... Previously, registered trade unions were prohibited from giving financial assistance to a candidate seeking election to a legislative body; now trade unions will neither be able to support such a candidate (e.g. through the union newspaper) or grant any assistance to a person seeking a position (e.g. party secretariatship) in a political party. (173)

The legal right of all unions to assist striking workers was curtailed by the Act. It was made an offence for all trade unions or federations to grant financial assistance to a striker with the object of 'inducing' or 'enabling' him or her to take part in an illegal strike. The effect of this was to make it a crime for a union or federation to provide strike pay for workers engaged in an illegal strike with a fine of R1000 attached to the crime. (174)

Since virtually all strikes with only one or two exceptions

were illegal, this measure denied trade unions the right of assisting their striking members. The independent trade unions were strongly opposed to this measure and at a conference of the independent unions held in August 1981 they agreed that they would

support each other in defying the restrictions on supporting striking workers... The prohibition on financial support for strikers will not be obeyed.  
(175)

### Conclusion

The industrial relations system in the country after the amendments based on the Wiehahn Commission was thus very different from the one facing the country at the start of the 1970s. The two greatest changes were the removal of the discriminatory dualistic system and the institution of a unified system that did not make distinctions based on colour, and the entrance of the independent trade unions as significant actors in the system. How this entry was achieved and the process through which the union became significant forces are considered in the next three parts of the thesis.

## Part 2

## NATAL

Part Two focuses on the emergence and development of the unions in the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in the Natal region from their origin in 1972, through the years they were constituted as the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC), up to the end of 1979.

This prologue commences with a description of relevant features of the Durban and Pietermaritzburg metropolitan regions, the two industrial areas in which the independent unions took root in Natal. It is followed by an examination of the roots of the FOSATU unions in 1972 and the impact of the Durban strikes of 1973. In the wake of the strikes a large number of unions and other organisations that related to each other in fairly complex ways sprung up. In order to clarify the nature of the organisations and their relationship to one another, the structural development of FOSATU from 1973 to 1979 is also presented in this prologue.

This is followed by a detailed historical analysis of each of the unions over four chapters. The unions that are considered are the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW), Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU), Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU) and the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU).

Besides the intrinsic value of a detailed historical account of the emergence and struggles of the unions, it also provides the basic information for the two major themes that are considered in the thesis, namely the strategies for power adopted by the unions and the extent of internal democracy they

established. Thus after presenting a synopsis of the major historical trends of the unions affiliated to FOSATU in Natal, the strategies for power and the democratisation of the movement are critically evaluated. Finally, the approach of TUACC, and later FOSATU, towards the KwaZulu government and Inkatha during the period is analysed.

### 1. The Durban and Pietermaritzburg Metropolitan Regions

After the Durban strike wave which also spread to Pietermaritzburg, independent unions emerged in both metropolitan areas. The Durban metropolitan area was of considerable economic significance, being the second largest in the country with the largest port in Africa in terms of the cargo handled.

(1) Although Pietermaritzburg was considerably less industrialised, it did employ sufficient Africans in the secondary and tertiary sectors for unionisation to commence in the region.

Table 1 provides an overview of the employment of Africans in the Durban and Pietermaritzburg metropolitan regions in 1970. It shows that Durban employed four and a half times as many Africans as Pietermaritzburg and that a larger proportion of the African labour force was employed in secondary industry in Durban (25,8% as opposed to 17,6%).

Table 1  
African Employment by Economic Sector, 1970

Sector	Region(1)					
	No.	Durban		Pietermaritzburg		
		%	% wo- men (2)	No.	%	% wo- men (2)
Primary						
Agriculture	8545	5,7	16,6	4149	12,5	21,1
Mining	646	0,4	0,6	290	0,9	0,7
Total	9191	6,1	15,4	4439	13,4	19,8
Secondary						
Manufacturing	27436	18,3	7,0	3415	10,3	3,7
Construction	9948	6,6	0,4	2208	6,7	0,6
Electricity	1333	0,9	0,1	186	0,6	0,5
Total	38717	25,8	5,1	5809	17,6	2,4
Tertiary						
Commerce	17288	11,5	10,6	3228	9,8	13,3
Finance	4606	3,1	6,2	383	1,2	10,7
Transport	13754	9,2	0,4	1862	5,6	0,5
Services	66390	44,3	59,6	17338	52,4	65,1
Total	102038	68,1	40,9	22811	69,0	38,7
Total	149946	100,0	30,1	33059	100,0	38,7

Note

(1) The Durban region includes the magisterial districts Durban, Pinetown and Inanda while Pietermaritzburg includes only one district.

(2) The '% women' indicates the proportion of employees in each sector and region who were women; for instance, in the manufacturing sector 7,0% of the employees in Durban and 3,7% in Pietermaritzburg were women.

Source: Department of Statistics, Population Census 1970, Occupation and Industry by District and Economic Regions, Report No.02-05-06, Table D2, pp.213-4.

A striking feature of both metropolitan regions is the fact that the primary sector employed relatively few Africans whereas the tertiary sector dominated in the employment of Africans. It provided more than two-thirds of the employment of Africans in both cases (68% and 69%). The preponderance of the tertiary sector in both regions was due to the services sector which provided approximately one in every two jobs for Africans in both regions. The majority of Africans in the service sector were women in domestic service.

The severe gender discrimination against women is highlighted by the contrast between their employment in the service sector as opposed to other sectors of the economy. As Table 1 shows, no less than 59,6% of the African employees in the service sector in Durban, and 65,1% in Pietermaritzburg, were women. On the other hand all the other sectors - even agriculture - consisted overwhelmingly of men. An indication of the extent to which African women had been discriminated against in the labour market is shown by the fact that, if services and agriculture are excluded, women only constituted an average of 5,5% of the total African employment in the remaining sectors. A consequence of this was that the independent unions were organising sectors of the economy where there were mostly African men and very few African women.

However, a considerable proportion of the labour force in the metropolitan regions consisted of Indian employees as well. Some indication of this is given by Table 2 which provides a profile of the employment of Indians and Africans in a selection of the industries in the manufacturing sector of Durban in 1979. The selection includes all the manufacturing industries which the independent unions considered in the thesis organised in the 1970s.

Table 2 shows that whereas almost half (47,6%) of the total labour force in the manufacturing sector consisted of Africans, no less than 35% were Indians. If one adds to this the 7576 Coloured employees in the sector at the time, then almost 40% of the labour force in manufacturing in Durban were Indians and Coloureds. Total African employment in manufacturing was therefore not far greater than total Indian and Coloured employment in Durban in 1979.

Table 2

## Employment in Manufacturing Sector in Durban 1979

Industry	Indian		African		Total	
	No.	% (1)	No.	% (1)	No.	% (1)
Textiles	5169	18,8	19961	72,4	27565	100,0
Clothing	26249	74,3	5194	14,7	35296	100,0
Wood and Furniture	2948	46,2	2575	40,4	6368	100,0
Chemicals and Plastics	3137	16,3	10956	56,8	19274	100,0
Metal and Machinery	2916	17,5	9461	56,7	16677	100,0
Motor	1557	20,5	3927	51,8	7582	100,0
Total (all industries)	63500	35,0	86348	47,6	181434	100,0

## Note

(1) The percentages give the proportion of Africans and Indians employed in each industry. They do not add up to 100% because White and Coloured employment figures have been omitted.

## Source:

Central Statistical Service, Census of Manufacturing 1979. Principal Statistics on a Regional Basis, Table 4, pp.57-8.

The proportion of African and Indian employees however varied significantly between the different industries. In the clothing industry Indians consisted of no less than 74,3% of the labour force whereas in the textile industry the ratio was reversed with Africans making up no less than 72,4% of the labour force. The historical reasons why such a high proportion of the labour force in the textile industry consisted of Africans is discussed in chapter three which deals with the National Union of Textile Workers.

Another aspect of the Durban and Pietermaritzburg regions that had a bearing on the independent unions was the proximity of KwaZulu, the Zulu 'homeland'. In particular, Durban was pincered between Kwazulu from the north and the south. The

'homeland' penetrated so deeply into Durban that its two largest African townships, Umlazi in the south and KwaMashu in the north, which served as labour supplying dormitories to the region, were both actually situated in KwaZulu. (2) In 1970 KwaMashu supplied 49172 workers of which 8861 were in manufacturing while Umlazi supplied 57037 workers of which 14361 were in manufacturing. A better indication of the enormity of the townships is provided by their population figures. It was estimated that, in 1977, Umlazi had a population of 271 700 and KwaMashu a population of 161 000. (3)

The significance of the extension of KwaZulu into the Durban metropolitan region for the independent unions was that the KwaZulu government and Inkatha constituted important political forces in the region. The independent unions were accordingly forced to take cognizance of these political forces in their midst.

## 2. The Emergence and Development of FOSATU 1972 - 1979

### 2.1 Origins and Structural Development of FOSATU in Natal 1972 - 1979

The institutional development of FOSATU in Natal from 1972 onwards was quite complex with a number of distinct, but interrelated organisations springing up. The form these organisations took, and the methods in which they operated were mainly determined by the response of the Black working class to their working and living conditions, but also by the political and economic situations prevailing at the time. At another level the institutions developed a dynamic and force of their own and developments within them were shaped by the events that had preceded them and the structures that were already in existence. In the exposition that follows these interrelated forces are

taken into consideration when tracing the institutional development of FOSATU in Natal.

#### The Origins of FOSATU in Natal 1970-1972

The origins of FOSATU in Natal can be traced to several independent but interrelated strands. These were the commitment of the Durban trade unionist Harriet Bolton to organising African workers, the founding of the students' Wages Commission on the Durban campus of the University of Natal, the intention of former SACTU members to revive trade unions amongst Africans, and the wave of strikes in Durban during January and February 1973.

Harriet Bolton was general secretary of the Natal branches of the registered Textile Workers' Industrial Union (TWIU), Garment Workers' Industrial Union as well as the Furniture and Allied Workers Industrial Union (FAWIU) in 1970. She was politically on the left in TUCSA and around that time she commenced employing young white intellectuals as assistants in order to revive the flagging registered unions. Thus by April 1970 Rob Lambert was employed as assistant secretary of the Furniture union. During one of his factory visits to Indian workers Lambert was challenged by a former member of a SACTU furniture union, Aurelius Mcwabe, that the FAWIU was doing nothing for African workers. Mcwabe, who was in favour of organising African workers into a separate union, was invited to a meeting with Lambert and Bolton, but Bolton proposed that a benefit fund for African workers should be started instead. Thus it was that Lambert started recruiting African workers into a benefit society. From that time on Bolton also took up the approach of 'organising the unorganised', namely African workers.

In another development the first Wages Commission was set up by students at the University of Natal, Durban, in mid-1971. The Wages Commission had three activities: to investigate wages of staff on the university campus, to give evidence at Wage Board enquiries, and to publish and distribute a worker newspaper, *Isisebenzi*, through which workers were advised on Wage Board hearings. Their approach was that they, as White students, could make their resources available to Black workers instead of offering all their skills to management as White students usually do in the end. Dave Hemson was in charge of Wage Board hearings and Halton Cheadle edited *Isisebenzi*. In addition they were in favour of the formation of African trade unions and in touch with Harriet Bolton. Thus it was that Hemson became employed by the TWIU in June 1972 to organise African workers. The prevailing mood he found amongst African workers was a fear of trade unions because of their previous experiences in SACTU unions.

The word which is repeated by the workers over and over again is 'fear'. There is a perpetual fear of victimisation by the employers and sometimes fear that the indunas will report them to the employers. (5)

This confirmed the validity of Bolton's proposal to commence organising African workers into a benefit society first. Hence Lambert and Hemson spent their energies recruiting African workers into the benefit society which was seen as a forerunner to trade unions. By June 1972 it had about 500 members and on 9 September 1972 the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund (GFWBF) was officially launched with over a 1000 signed on members. (6)

In this endeavour they wanted to involve former SACTU members as much as possible. Quite independently, and preceding these events, erstwhile members of SACTU had been trying for several months to revive SACTU. The idea was abandoned because of police harassment. They thereupon decided to support the

GFWBF and Wages Commission and to get involved in organising workers. (7)

Black worker militancy in Durban was on the increase during this period. In April 1969 almost 2000 African dockworkers went on strike for higher wages. (8) In October 1972 dockworkers in Durban went on strike again over the delay in wage increases following the Wage Board sitting in June that year. At the sitting the dockworkers had demanded an increase from R8,50 to R18 per week, the existing Poverty Datum Level at the time, which was recommended by the Wages Commission through Isisebenzi. (9)

In January and February 1973 a strike wave hit Durban in which at least 61 000 African workers went on strike. In some cases they were joined by Indian workers as well. The strikes commenced at a steady trickle for the first 2 weeks, but then they turned into a flood for two weeks occurring mainly in factories in the textile and engineering industries. No less than 146 establishments were hit by strikes. Of these 26 were in the textile industry followed by 22 in engineering. Particularly noticeable were the strikes in the textile mills in Pinetown-New Germany and Jacobs-Mobeni industrial complexes. Many of these were owned by the Frame Group. Low wages were the predominant reasons for the strikes. Where statutory works committees had existed, they were totally ignored by workers as negotiating bodies. (10) The strikes were all of short duration and were demonstration stoppages rather than trials of strength. Three quarters of the strikes were less than three days duration and the longest was seven days. (11) The workers' vulnerability and their inability to sustain themselves rapidly forced them back to work.

The effects of these strikes were to heighten African worker militancy and consciousness of the need to organise themselves.

Consequently membership of the Benefit Fund shot up rapidly and six African unions emerged over the next two years in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. These formed the basis of FOSATU in Natal. Because of the complex interrelatedness of the unions with other institutions in the movement, it is useful to present an overview of the structural development of FOSATU in Natal before considering the history and struggles of the individual unions.

## 2.2 Structural Development of FOSATU in Natal 1973-1979

The first institution to develop after the Durban strikes was an administrative body. During the strikes in January-February 1973 a committee comprising Harriet Bolton, Archbishop Dennis Hurley, TUCSA trade unionists, Richard Turner, and others was set up to raise funds. Partly as a result of their efforts the Central Administration Services (CAS) was established in March 1973 to administer the funds. (12) CAS was however also established to control as well as provide an institutional base for new African unions envisaged by its founders. By having Whites on its controlling committee, CAS enabled the new African unions to circumvent the Group Areas Act by operating from an area declared White by the Act. At that stage these activities were centred at Bolton Hall, a trade union centre that housed, amongst others, the registered Textile, Garment and Furniture unions. According to another account CAS was started in order

to draw all the registered unions in Bolton Hall into a concerted drive to form parallel-type unions to the registered ones...the unions involved were thus Garment, Furniture, Textile and Motor Assemblies. B.F.[Benefit Fund - JM], U.T.P.[Urban Training Project - JM], and Wages Commission representatives sat on C.A.S. also.  
(13)

In the wake of the heightened worker consciousness and militancy African trade unions were set up in fairly rapid

succession. On 28 April 1973 the Steering Committee of a Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) held its first meeting in Durban. Due to independent organisational efforts in Pietermaritzburg an elected Branch Executive Committee (BEC) of MAWU for that region met on 9 June 1973 for the first time. After further organisation the Durban branch held its first BEC meeting on 10 November 1973. Organisation amongst African textile workers proceeded apace under the auspices of the registered TWIU. In June a Caretaker Committee was elected to organise African workers and on 23 September 1973 the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) held its inaugural meeting with about 500 workers attending. Amongst the guest speakers was the Kwazulu Executive Councillor of Community Affairs, Mr Barney Dladla. On 30 August 1973 the Union of Clothing and Allied Workers was founded. From its inception it had a close relationship with the registered Natal Garment Workers' Industrial Union and very soon moved away from TUACC into its parent union's bosom. In February 1974 the Furniture and Timber Workers' Union (FTWU) was formally launched. A driving force behind the union was Aurelius Mncwabe, a former SACTU member, even though Dave Hemson, who was assistant secretary of the registered Furniture union at that time, formally founded the union. (14)

The GFWBF was growing extremely rapidly during this period of high worker militancy. Whereas in August 1973 the Benefit Fund had 6 000 members, by March 1974 it had between 15 000 and 17 000 members. (15) It was also building up considerable funds in view of its massive membership. Members of the Benefit Fund from African Explosives and Chemical Industries started organising themselves towards the end of 1973 and expressed the desire to belong to a union. As a result an organiser was

appointed in June 1974 to start organising chemical workers. Eventually, on 24 November 1974, the inaugural meeting of the Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU) was held.

However in May 1974 the state moved in against the GFWBF because it was acting as the base of new trade unions and building up a potential reserve strike fund for the unions. The state prosecuted officials of the Fund for running an illegal Benefit Society. As a result the Executive of the GFWBF decided in September 1974 to transform the organisation into a union, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). (16) The union was divided into two sectors, the Industrial Sector for members from the organised factories, and the General Sector for members from unorganised factories. The overwhelming majority of members were placed in the General Sector. The union was thereupon formally founded in 1975.

Not only trade unions were founded as a result of the workers' militancy in Durban in 1973. On 30 May 1973 the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) was launched with CAS funding. Its founders, who included Harriet Bolton, Richard Turner and Fozzia Fisher, discovered that workers were unaware of their rights as workers during the Durban strikes. As a result the Institute's aims were to provide education for workers on a broad front by means of a correspondence course through which workers could learn about their rights as workers and how to organise themselves into trade unions.

The IIE was very concerned about its own legitimacy in the eyes of the state and to this end it obtained people with status to serve on its Council as a protective umbrella over its Working Committee. Thus it put a great deal of emphasis on links with the Kwazulu Government and appointed Chief Gatsha Buthelezi as

life Chancellor of the Institute. In addition it also desired to have links with potentially supportative organisations and people. To this end it granted representation to TUCSA, UTP and the SA Institute of Race Relations on the IIE Council.

It was not only the IIE that set store by contact with the Kwazulu Government. The unions also did and they successfully developed a close relationship with Executive Councillor Barney Dladla who assisted the unions and workers in the settlement of strikes. In order to formalise the unions' relationship with the Kwazulu Government and to co-ordinate the affairs of the unions the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC) was established in January 1974. Regular three-monthly meetings between four Kwazulu Government officials and two representatives from each of the unions was built into the constitution. (17)

Contradictions however started emerging between the interests of the unions and the Kwazulu Government when Dladla fell into disfavour in the Kwazulu Executive Council because of his popular support from Zulu workers. As a result he was removed from his post in May 1975 and the Kwazulu Government withdrew their support from TUACC and the unions. As a result TUACC was reconstituted in June 1975 with the central purpose of uniting the unions in a co-ordinating body. It centralised fund-raising and the provision of infrastructural resources to the unions, as well as the formulation of policy of the unions. (18)

The emergent unions also considered it advisable not to isolate themselves and they initially sought to obtain support of the kind given to the NUTW by the TWIU from the larger and more significant unions in TUCSA. Consequently in 1973 and 1974 the unions accepted invitations to attend the TUCSA Annual Conferences as observers where their representatives also spoke.

However these efforts were seriously jeopardised by David Davis who gave a speech supporting SACTU and attacking TUCSA at its 1973 Conference. This and other events soured the relationship between TUCSA and the TUACC unions and efforts to gain TUCSA's support came to a halt in 1975.

Structurally TUACC was a representative body. Its Council consisted of the Branch Executive Committees (BECs) of the affiliated unions and its Secretariat was composed of two representatives from each union at least one of which was an elected worker representative. In practice however the Secretariat was dominated by the unions' secretaries. The unions affiliated to TUACC in mid-1975 were MAWU, NUTW, CWIU, TGWU and the FTWU. The Natal branch of the TWIU was also closely allied with TUACC, but not constitutionally a member. Relationships between TUACC and the Union of Clothing and Allied Workers had by that stage deteriorated to merely maintaining informal contact. (19) The following year the FTWU collapsed due to financial corruption of its secretary who embezzled about R500 of the union's funds. (20) What remained of the Furniture union was absorbed into the TGWU.

TUACC expanded structurally in the later seventies. In 1978 it changed from a regional to a national co-ordinating body by uniting with the Transvaal-based Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand (CIWW). This followed on the heels of the amalgamation of the Natal and Transvaal branches of MAWU the previous year. In April 1979 the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was founded after two years of deliberations between TUACC and other unions. TUACC therefore dissolved itself as its unions merged into the new Federation. Details of the structures of FOSATU are elaborated in the chapter

on FOSATU in the Transvaal. To summarise the main points, FOSATU constituted a tight-knit federation with centralised sharing of financial and infrastructural resources as well as a common policy. Nonetheless each region exercised considerable autonomy and the former TUACC unions in Natal along with the registered National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA) and its parallel union, the United Automobile Rubber and Allied Workers' Union (UAW), operated together on the Natal Regional Executive Committee. This was the structural situation that prevailed in the Natal region up to the end of 1979.

The financing of TUACC and FOSATU in Natal was a matter of great importance to the movement and the way in which this was done from 1977 to 1979 is considered next.

### 2.3 TUACC and FOSATU (Natal) Finances

The TUACC unions, like other independent unions in the country, relied heavily in their early stages on financial donations from overseas. However as union organisation deepened and became more stable an increasing proportion of the movement's revenue was raised from worker subscriptions. This is indicated by Table 3 which sketches the financial situation of the unions in TUACC and FOSATU in Natal from 1977 to 1979.

TABLE 3

UNION	YEAR	INCOME FROM SUBS(1)	EXPENDITURE (2)	SUBS AS % OF EXPENDITURE
NUTW	1977	R3 700	-	-
	1978	R5 500	R11 700	47
	1979	R9 900	-	-
MAWU (Natal)	1977	R2 500	-	-
	1978	R4 900	R10 000	49
	1979	R8 000	-	-
TGWU	1977	R3 600	-	-
	1978	R4 100	R6 800	60
	1979	R1 600	-	-
CWIU	1977	R1 400	-	-
	1978	R1 400	R4 600	30
	1979	R2 000	-	-
TWP	1977	R17 800	-	-
	1978	R16 800	R18 000 (3)	93
	1979	R14 500	-	-

Sources: 1977 and 1978 - A. Erwin, 17 Dec '79  
 1979 - Unions: interviews with secretaries, Oct-Nov '79  
 TWP: Financial Statement for Sept '79.

- Notes: (1) Income from subscriptions for 1979 are estimates based on average monthly subscriptions provided by union secretaries. In the case of TWP the annual figure was extrapolated from September's subscriptions.  
 (2) Expenditure of the unions excludes rent and maintenance of vehicles, but not petrol costs.  
 (3) The TWP's expenditure constituted mainly benefits.

Table 3 shows that, in 1978, excluding rent and maintenance of vehicles, the unions covered from 30% to 60% of their remaining current costs from worker subscriptions. MAWU and the NUTW, the two largest unions, were covering about half these current costs which included wages and fuel, two major items of union expenditure. Subscriptions for three of the four unions indicated an upward trend.

For FOSATU as a whole income from subscriptions were estimated to constitute about 30-40% of total expenditure in 1979. (21) In the financial year ending in July 1979 FOSATU raised no less than R84 719 in donations from trade union

federations in Western Europe, principally the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Substantial grants totalling R72 664 had to be made to the unions during the financial year. Broken down by union, the grants were distributed as follows: MAWU - R36 043, TGWU - R16 784, NUTW - R10 073, CWIU - R9 764. (22)

FOSATU did not accept money with any strings attached by the donors. In order to minimise the potential for control from overseas donors, TUACC/FOSATU policy was to raise money centrally through the federation and not through the individual unions. The requirements of the unions would not be itemised, but be presented as lump sums in order to prevent the donors from specifying what their money was to be used for. (23)

Although none of the unions in FOSATU Natal were financially self-reliant by the end of 1979 they were all raising a reasonable proportion of their current costs from worker subscriptions. Worker representatives were encouraged to keep a check on how organisers were handling their money. (24) In practice it was however difficult for members working a full day to keep a check on the officials' handling of their money. The union officials did however institute elaborate methods to try and prevent embezzlement of workers' money for fear of antagonising the workers and losing their support.

Having outlined the structural development and financial position of FOSATU in Natal up to 1979, the foundations have been laid for considering the detailed history of each of the former TUACC unions in FOSATU.

## Chapter 3

### The National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) 1973-1979

The aim of this chapter is to provide an historical account of the NUTW from its origin up to November 1979. The history of the union can broadly be divided into three phases during this period: The first phase, a relatively short one lasting up to about mid-1974, was one of mass membership and high expectations on the part of the union. The second phase was one of transition to workplace organisation which placed an emphasis on the role of the shop stewards. In the third phase, which commenced in 1977, the union concentrated on organising a few factories well and fought a campaign to renew the recognition agreement it had with Smith and Nephew.

#### 1. Origins and Formation of the NUTW

Although the Durban strikes of 1973 provided a big impetus in the formation of the NUTW, the foundations of the union were laid before the strikes. (1) The NUTW origins are to be found in Harriet Bolton's commitment to organise African workers in the early 1970s. On her recommendation to Norman Daniels, general secretary of the national Textile Workers' Industrial Union (TWIU), Dave Hemson was appointed national organiser to revive the flagging Durban branch of the TWIU in July 1972. From that position Hemson was able to recruit African textile workers into the GFWBF once it had been founded. By January 1973 when Halton Cheadle replaced Hemson, African textile workers were already organised to some extent in the GFWBF. (2)

During the 1973 Durban strikes that commenced in the same month, the registered TWIU was the only union that intervened

directly on behalf of striking workers. At the height of the strike about 8000 textile workers went out on strike and there was one day, 29 January, when not a single Frame factory was in operation in Natal. Of the 41 textile mills in Natal 26 had strikes while the remaining 15 experienced some form or other of industrial conflict. (3)

The TWIU was in touch with workers from a number of mills, but it only represented striking workers at two of them: Smith and Nephew, and Consolidated Textile Mills (CTM). In the case of Smith and Nephew the TWIU organiser managed to negotiate a considerable increase in the male workers' basic wage to R18 per week by proposing to management an amalgamation of the lowest paid workers' bonuses with the basic wage. The women's wages however still lagged behind at R12 per week. In this way the striking workers' demand was met without increasing the total wage bill 'dramatically'. At CTM where the workers struck for 7 days the union managed to wring a couple of concessions from the company before the workers reluctantly decided to return to work without their major wage demands met. The concessions were that one day's strike pay would be paid and no workers would be fired. The TWIU's interventions in the strike considerably strengthened the support of the union from both Indian and African workers. (4) It was to carry on playing a meaningful role in organising African workers until a split developed between the TWIU and NUTW after November 1976.

The registered union also carried on actively intervening on behalf of African workers. In August 1973 when 500 African workers at Frame's Wentex Mill in Jacobs went on strike over a 5% wage increase that they considered to be too low, the TWIU made representations on their behalf at the Industrial Council as well

as the TUCSA Annual Conference a week after the strike. (5) The strikers were fired and the company only selectively re-employed workers refusing to re-engage those it clearly regarded as troublemakers, including nine works committee members'. (6) TUCSA donated R3500 in aid of 75 of the dismissed workers and appealed to the Minister of Labour to order the Frame Group to reinstate them, but the Minister used a technical point as an excuse for doing nothing. (7)

However the organisational thrust of African textile workers came from the work being done through the GFWBF. By June 1973 organisation was sufficiently advanced to form a Steering Committee of African textile workers to draw up a constitution for a new union. Cheadle drafted the constitution by amalgamating about ten different constitutions including ones from British and American unions. (8)

The inaugural meeting of the NUTW was held on 23 September 1973 with Mr Barney Dladla, Kwazulu Executive Councillor of Community Affairs, and over 500 textile workers in attendance. Dladla assured the meeting that the Kwazulu Government would pledge their fullest support especially because their wages are made out of workers' money.' He also assured the workers of his immediate support in cases of emergency. 'Once the workers are faced with any difficulty, they could ring him and he himself would call a meeting.' (9)

Cheadle thereupon explained the activities of the BEC and members were elected with representatives from Smith and Nephew, Dano Textiles, Nortex, Seltex, Frametex and Afritex serving on the Committee. Two other factories, Pinetex and Ropes & Mattings were also to elect representatives soon, making a total of 8 mills that were organised at that stage. Membership of the union already stood at over 800. (10)

## 2. Phase of Mass Membership. Sept 1973 to Mid-1975

Support for the union from workers in the wake of the Durban strikes was strong and paid up membership increased rapidly. Over a six-week period ending in October 1973 the union collected R1690,70 from subscriptions indicating a paid up membership of about 1300. (11)

In the third month of its existence the NUTW gained an immense achievement by getting Smith and Nephew to agree to recognise the unregistered African union. This followed after a work stoppage at the company in November 1973. The strike took place after management, in breach of an understanding with the TWIU, announced new wage levels without negotiating with the union first. One Wednesday in November, the weekday on which the union organiser could visit workers in the plant, the workers streamed out of the factory with the Indian workers leading the way just as the organiser, Halton Cheadle, arrived.

The organiser asked management for the opportunity to speak to all the workers alone to try and coax them back to work. Once he was alone with the 650 Indian and African workers, they went through the union's demands. They decided that they would not accept the wages offered, that they wanted protection against dismissal, and they wanted an agreement for the unregistered union. Thereupon the workers returned to work while the organiser and a shop steward negotiated with the Smith and Nephew management. The following day management announced that they were prepared to recognise the NUTW in principle and to sign an agreement with it. (12)

Although the NUTW was given the de facto right to elect shop stewards in each department at Smith and Nephew soon afterwards in January 1974, it took a considerable time before the Agreement was finally signed on 19 July 1974. This was in part due to the

disruption the union experienced as a result of the banning of Cheadle at the end of January 1974. It was also due to the fact that workers were primarily interested in the wage levels, not the Agreement and its contents. Consequently there was no pressure from workers on the company when the Agreement was finally negotiated by an organiser, John Copelyn, who joined the TWIU as a national organiser in May 1974, along with shop stewards from the company. (13) This was reflected in the terms and conditions of the Agreement finally negotiated by the unions.

A unique feature of the Agreement was that it was signed between Smith and Nephew on the one hand and both the TWIU and NUTW on the other hand. The Agreement granted the unions access to the company's premises outside of working hours and for three hours on Wednesdays around lunchtime. The company also recognised shop stewards by agreeing that 'each department, where practicable, shall elect a shop steward who will represent the unions in such department.' (14) The shop stewards were however not given explicit powers to negotiate directly with management.

In the case of disputes or grievances all cases would eventually end up at the arbitration procedure which was to be 'the exclusive means for the determination and settlement of all disputes and grievances.' (15) The unions thereby agreed not to resort to strike action during the currency of the Agreement which was to last for three years. The unions also undertook not to 'encourage or support any strike, picketing, stoppage or slow-down of work by any of their members' while the company agreed not to engage in any lock-out of its employees. (16)

In terms of the employment rules the union managed to negotiate annual wage increases linked to the Consumer Price

Index with a two and a half per cent 'standard of living increase'. Workers could also earn a production bonus equal to a third of the basic wage if they met 100% of their production targets as well as a joint service allowance and attendance bonus.

Thus while the Agreement did allow the NUTW access onto the company's premises and the recognition of shop stewards on the shopfloor, it also curtailed the union's rights by forbidding resort to strike action for the three years duration of the Agreement. However, John Copelyn felt afterwards that 'the serious benefits of that Agreement' were 'really substantial organisational gains for workers.' (17) Furthermore, the Agreement has to be seen in the light of the conditions that prevailed at the time. In a situation where the entire state machinery was hostile to the union's existence, the Agreement constituted a commitment on the part of the company not to rely upon the state to resolve conflict. Although the rights of workers in the Agreement were limited, they were tremendously important to the union in that situation. (18)

An example of the organisational gain made by the union at Smith and Nephew was provided in November 1974 when a shop steward, Moffat Sabela, was issued with a final warning for allegedly holding a meeting during company time. The NUTW took up the issue and established that Sabela was encouraging workers during an hour-long work stoppage over a grievance to commence working again and to take up their complaint through the regular channels. When presented with these facts, the final warning served on Sabela was withdrawn. (19)

The buoyancy of the NUTW was sustained when a renewed wave of strikes hit the textile industry in Durban in January 1974. The strikes were a direct response to the Cotton Order made by

the Minister of Labour that came into operation on 7 January 1974. Workers had no say whatsoever in the wages determined by an Order. The Minister would make an Order on the recommendation of an employer association after consultation with the Wage Board and the Central Bantu Labour Board. (20) The Order could be made binding on all companies in the industry.

Wages in the cotton sector were the lowest in the textile industry, and workers had pinned their hopes on a substantial improvement in this sector. However the increases contained in the Order were far below expectations. The largest increase was for Grade 1 labourers and cleaners whose wages rose from R11,50 to R13 per week for men and from R8,50 to R10,40 per week for women. In the top Grade 4 there were no increases at all. (21)

At the Frame Group's Pinetex Mill about 1800 workers struck, and, when the police arrested 250 of them, the strike spread three days later through ten more textile mills, four of which were from the Frame Group at Pinetown-New Germany, namely Natal Knitting Mills, Nortex, Seltex and Frametex. The NUTW was resourceful in finding mediators who would help strengthen the workers' demands. It drew in Kwazulu's Executive Councillor Barney Dladla, who dramatically led 5000 striking workers through the streets to the Frametex factory gate where he successfully insisted that management negotiate with the NUTW. The paltry increases offered by the Frame Group were reluctantly accepted by the workers who were in a weak bargaining position as not all mill sections were out on strike. (22)

A week after the strikes took place Cheadle and Hemson were banned on 31 January 1974. However White intellectuals continued to play an active part in the NUTW. Cheadle was followed by Humphrey Glass who came into the union in February

1974, but he left three months later because he had 'come to feel there was no positive role he as a White man could play'. (23) The BEC never accepted that as a valid reason as was demonstrated by the fact that Copelyn carried on playing an active role in the NUTW.

State disruption of the NUTW also manifested itself in another way. In April 1974 the NUTW decided it would try to organise a legal strike at, Pinetex, a Frame mill in Pinetown, over an apparent victimisation of six contract workers. The union accordingly went through all the steps it deemed necessary to legalise the strike. On the morning of the intended strike an organiser, Wiseman Mbali, threatened workers coming onto morning shift with dire consequences if they did not go on strike. (24) This was contrary to the union's wishes and the strike attempt failed. The state however prosecuted Mbali for inciting workers to strike. (25) In the end he was found guilty 'through a most minor technical error, namely handing in a letter to the Labour Officer in Pinetown rather than Durban.' (26)

In spite of the bannings, expectations were still high in the NUTW that quick gains could be made through obtaining recognition from companies. This was probably because union membership was still high and rising on account of worker militancy as evidenced by the strikes and because of the quick recognition gained at Smith and Nephew. For instance, the expectation existed in March 1974 that SA Fabrics would recognise the NUTW even though only 48 out of 300 workers had joined the union. Copelyn captured the mood that existed then:

In 1974 there was expectation - Smith and Nephew had signed an agreement, SA Fabrics was negotiating one with us, there were all sorts of things in the air. People were expecting big breakthroughs any minute. (27)

However these expectations were dashed as the strike waves

in Durban's textile industry came to an end after early 1974. There was still a somewhat belated strike in August 1984 over a minimal R1 wage increase of the Cotton Order at the Texfin and Ultex mills of the Frame Group's Consolidated Fine Spinners and Weavers. Even though the striking workers did not win their wage demand of a R10 weekly increase, the NUTW succeeded in preventing management from victimising any of the striking workers and they were all re-employed. On this occasion the union managed to arrange the intervention of the United Party Member of Parliament for Pinetown, Graham McIntosh, on the side of the workers. (28) The strike most probably gave a spurt to organisation at the two mills in 1975. (29)

Although the strike waves came to an end after January 1974 the second wave sustained the NUTW's high membership enrolment throughout the first half of 1974 and even into 1975 in spite of the banning of Cheadle. By February 1974 it had approximately 3500 signed up members. (30) This figure rose to over 5000 in June 1974. (31) A year later signed up membership had risen to no less than 7000. (32) But these figures were not a reliable indicator of the union's actual organisational strength. A more reliable indicator of the state of the union was paid up membership.

According to paid up union membership figures the NUTW reached a serious turning point during the second half of 1975. Paid up membership remained more or less steady at the level attained in October 1973 up to about mid-1975, although it declined slightly from the fourth quarter of 1974 up to July 1975. From July to September 1974 the union collected R1437 per month on average from subscriptions and from September 1974 to July 1975 it dropped slightly to R1108 per month on average. (33) In the second half of 1975 paid up membership of the union

however slumped very heavily to less than half its previous level. From September to December 1975 subscriptions amounted to R501 per month on average. In 1976 this dropped even further with the monthly average subscriptions being round about R430. (34) Thus paid up membership in 1976 had dropped to about one-third of the level the union had sustained throughout 1974 and into the first half of 1975.

This drop in paid up membership could partly be explained by a gradual decline in worker militancy as reflected by the decrease in strikes after January 1974, as well as by a severe recession that commenced in the textile industry in about September 1974 due to the importation of cheaper fabrics from the Far East, particularly Japan. By March 1975 newspapers reported that more than 10 000 textile workers in South Africa had been laid off, that thousands more were on short-time and that large sectors of the industry were working at 60% of capacity or less. (35)

Textile workers in Natal, and therefore the NUTW, received a heavy blow with the large scale retrenchments. At Nortex a shift was cut out and at Ropes & Matting the same happened after a successful strike that resulted in a small wage increase. Management used the occasion to dismiss the workers' spokesman who had 19 years service in the company. Wentex and SA Fabrics had two rounds of retrenchments while Dano had three rounds. (36)

But the decline in worker militancy and the recession only partially explain the decrease in membership of the NUTW. Heavy import duties were imposed on a wide range of imported textile goods and by May 1975 employment in the textile industry was recovering and had risen above the 1973 level again. (37)

There were other very important forces at work that influenced the strength of the NUTW. They were a managerial counter-offensive against the union that commenced almost as soon as the union came into existence, ineffectiveness of the organisational strategy of the union, ideological and political conflict within the union, as well as a state offensive against the union. These forces accounted for the end of the phase of mass enrolment of members by the union and gave rise to a new phase of transition towards in-depth shop floor organisation that commenced as early as the second half of 1974 even though the union still retained an upward momentum in signed up membership for another year. In order to understand the dynamics that brought this about it is necessary to examine each of these aspects in detail.

### 3. Phase of Transition to In-Depth Work Place Organisation Mid-1974 to 1976

#### 3.1 Change in Organisational Strategy

The initial organisational strategy of the NUTW was for organisers simply to sign on members in the union office and outside the factory gates. This was possible because workers were streaming into the union because of the raised worker consciousness as a result of the 1973 strike wave. It was also due to the inexperience of the organisers and their unawareness of the consequences of such an organisational strategy.

The first change was brought about at Smith and Nephew when its management agreed to recognise the union and the negotiation of the Agreement commenced. The NUTW organised a shop stewards committee with representatives from each department. Some of them, with the TWIU shop stewards and an organiser, negotiated the agreement with management. (38) At that stage of the

union's development the shop stewards at Smith and Nephew thus developed a much greater awareness and involvement in the union than the rank and file members did.

The introduction of shop stewards at Smith and Nephew was not immediately accompanied by a general switch away from mass recruitment to in-depth shopfloor organisation in the union even though the acting secretary Halton Cheadle had reformulated a new organisational strategy shortly before his banning in January 1974. His reason for doing so was because the union was not achieving anything substantial.

I did a statistical analysis of what was happening and we were just going factory by factory like a wind just blowing through them leaving them no better off - just an entrance fee and two or three subscriptions the worse afterwards. (39)

The organisational method of 'blowing through factories like the wind' explains why the cumulative signed up membership of the union kept increasing while the paid up membership remained fairly constant. There was effectively a large turnover of membership with existing members lapsing as rapidly as new members were being signed on. With the lapsed members still being counted as signed on members the union would appear to be growing in size when it was in fact not doing so.

By the time Cheadle was banned in January 1974 the strategy that he had devised for the NUTW was

essentially one of consolidation: membership in depth organised, rather than a wide ranging unorganised membership. While workers from other Textile factories would be signed on if they wished to join, it was made clear that until a majority of the workers of their particular firm joined the Union, the Union would be no more than a benefit dispenser, advice bureau, and legal protector. (40)

As a result of this strategy the factories which the union was to organise were divided up between organisers, each of whom was given only two to four factories to organise. (41) Between

ten and fifteen factories where the union only had 5% to 10% membership were dropped. (42)

The introduction of shop stewards into the factories was another strand of the strategy. This proceeded more slowly and it was only Smith and Nephew which had elected shop stewards by January 1974. Five factories were in the process of electing shop stewards, but in spite of the intention that shop stewards were to recruit members, collect dues and handle complaints of workers, these tasks were still performed by organisers at the time. (43)

The move towards in-depth factory organisation was given a further boost at a staff meeting of the NUTW in July 1974 when

it was generally felt that the rush for buses and the huge size of these factories makes it very difficult to rely much on organizing outside the factory gates. Factory organization inside the factory is the only way for us to proceed further than we have. (44)

But even then the new strategy of shopfloor organisation was not fully worked out and starting to be implemented until as late as the second half of 1975. There were a number of reasons for this including the time required in properly formulating and implementing the new policy, structural obstacles to organisation, and an alternative approach to trade unionism deliberately adopted by some of the NUTW organisers. These are discussed in turn.

The procedure for joining the union was the first innovation to be worked out. According to Chris Albertyn, an organiser who joined the NUTW in June 1975, a worker could no longer simply go to the union office and join the union, but was required to join the union through the shop steward in his department. Then,

once a worker has completed a joining form the worker brings it to the next shop steward meeting where a new membership card is prepared...and his membership is motivated in the meeting. The membership card is then kept until the next general factory meeting, which

should occur at least every 6 weeks, where the member joins in front of all the other members, receiving his card in front of them. (45)

The advantage of the new strategy was that the shop steward would know all the members in his department. The tasks as envisaged by Albertyn, was for shop stewards to take union organisation to the work place:

The tasks of shop stewards were, primarily, to convene meetings, before and after shop steward meetings, of the workers in their departments to learn of problems and to report back on shop steward discussions and decisions; to enroll new members; to introduce new workers and new members to the union members; to isolate workers opposed to the union; to collect the members' subscriptions each week and to return their receipts for the money paid; to urge workers to continue with their subscriptions and to discuss carefully with them the reasons for their arrears; to raise complaints of workers with management; to plan tactics with the workers of the department; to communicate the important issues of the department to the union office at shop stewards meetings; to transmit educational and instructive pamphlets, books and newspapers from the union office to the members, and to report the workers' responses. The task was numerous and difficult: co-ordination, organization, and primarily, passing information so that members and officials could act on the basis of a clear understanding of the issues. (46)

The new strategy turned out to be difficult to put into practice since the shop stewards had not yet developed a sufficient grasp of their organisational responsibilities. As a result the organisers concentrated on training the shop stewards in their new responsibilities at the expense of all else.

A short-sighted mistake the organisers made was to assume that by encouraging shop stewards to hold meetings with the members of their departments, instead of actually organising and preparing those meetings, the shop stewards would do so, when, in fact, they were not. The general factory meeting was also not stressed as a priority and thus the rank and file union members, the mass of members, were neglected and did not actively participate in the union's organisational thrust. It was only towards the end of 1976 that regular factory meetings were being

called at roughly six-weekly intervals at the union offices. (47)

A structural obstacle to effective organisation arose due to the fact that the NUTW concentrated on the cotton section, which included the large Frame factories in Pinetown. With the union's limited resources at the time, it encountered a structural difficulty in organising factories with 2000 to 4000 members. In a single company there could be as many as 7 mills, each with their own shift system. These would be staggered so that

workers would come in at different stages and it would just be impossible to organise shop steward committees, impossible to collect subscriptions. (48)

The intended change in organising strategy to concentrate on in-depth organisation in fewer factories heralded the end of the union's phase of mass membership recruitment. It was as much a response to the new circumstance facing the union as was the mass recruitment phase.

However, the change in union strategy did not take place instantly as an event, but was rather a process that took considerable time to reach fruition. One of the reasons why the process was time-consuming was the existence of ideological and political differences between the organisers in the union. These differences also weakened the union in the ways described below.

### 3.2 Ideological and Political Conflict in the NUTW

Ideological and political differences emerged in the union and came to a head early in 1975 when three organisers started supporting a Black Consciousness (BC) orientation. Two of them consequently joined the Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU) while they were still working for the NUTW.

According to Copelyn, their BC orientation was not the real

bone of contention in the union. It was the fact that the three organisers wished to be undisputed leaders of the union and would not accept the duty to account to others in a systematic way. (49). It weakened the union to have organisers who were unaccountable for their activities to the union's members. Other intellectuals thought it was due to resentment of the surveillance by Whites of the handling of union funds by one of the union organisers.

The BC organisers however attributed the union's lack of progress to the presence of Whites in the union. They diagnosed that the problem with the union was 'Whites who were dominating and that was why the union had collapsed so badly'. (50) They canvassed support for their position amongst other organisers where they gained fairly extensive support. They finally made a bid for power to change the non-racial orientation of the union towards a Black Consciousness one.

The confrontation was resolved through the Branch Executive Committee (BEC). At a meeting where the Black Consciousness organisers were absent, the White organisers asked the BEC to decide whom they wanted because they could no longer continue under those conditions. The BEC unanimously decided to fire the Black Consciousness organisers who appealed against the decision and a second BEC meeting was held where both sides mustered all the support they could get. Events thereupon took a somewhat bizarre turn:

Five BAWU members turned up at the meeting and, when asked to leave, one of the BAWU reps made a short speech and gave a Black power salute to which the three organisers in question responded in kind. The BEC meeting had to be abandoned and when it reconvened the three organisers were dismissed. (51)

The BC organisers then decided to take their case to the workers in the Pinetown factories where they had been leaders

during the 1973 and 1974 strikes. After three weeks of struggle for the support of workers, the BC organisers were neutralised at the shopfloor level. (52) The non-racial policy in the union was reinforced in the union by these events which had a disruptive effect on the union. The conflict between the organisers over the ideological direction of the union had ramifications on the members who perceived the conflict and took sides over the issues as well. The union therefore lost some membership support on account of the conflict.

A similar type of conflict between the organisers was to re-emerge later in the year. It had a much greater disruptive effect on the union by setting back organisation at a number of factories. The conflict centred around Thizi Khumalo, an elderly organiser who came into the union after being fired from Consolidated Textile Mills during the 1973 strikes and working voluntarily for 6 months for the NUTW. Although he had little formal education, he was a very astute and respected worker leader. During 1974 he worked closely with John Copelyn in organising Smith and Nephew and signed the Agreement on behalf of the NUTW. However, late in 1975 when union membership and organisation was deteriorating, the new organisational strategy was implemented with a new determination. One of the requirements was for organisers to write reports of their activities for BEC meetings in order to provide the BEC with some measure of control over the organisers.

As early as May 1974 this had become an issue between Khumalo and the BEC. At a meeting when a query arose over the factory reports Khumalo explained that all the organisers had refused to fill them in. The BEC members took exception to this and one member argued that

there was a principle here which was that the BEC employed the organisers to do its work and they were not allowed to refuse. (53)

The chairman thereupon demanded that factory reports had to be presented to the next meeting. (54)

Khumalo's reluctance to present written reports to the BEC became the issue over which a conflict between him and other organisers, particularly John Copelyn, erupted at a BEC meeting in October 1975. Copelyn proposed that the practice of writing reports be re-introduced whereupon Khumalo objected on the grounds that he wrote with difficulty. This brought the simmering conflict between them to the open in the BEC. Copelyn criticised Khumalo for implying that the union was only to be organised by educated people and for putting forward such arguments outside the BEC. (55) Copelyn was referring to a meeting of shop stewards from Carpet Manufacturing Company (CMC) the previous month where Khumalo had engaged in a major diatribe against Copelyn, claiming that the latter was trying to squeeze him out of the union because he, Khumalo, was just a simple, uneducated worker and the union had become a place for intellectuals. (56)

According to Copelyn Khumalo was reluctant to write factory reports because he did not want to be accountable to the BEC. He could write, although he did so with difficulty in English, but there was no requirement for him to write in English. (57) His reluctance to submit written accounts could have been related to his organisational method. According to organisers that worked with him, he was particularly good at dealing with workers' complaints, but reluctant to visit factories. He slowed down and disrupted shop steward committee meetings by raising trivial issues and having women around him who made copious teas before the meetings. (58) For instance, at Ropes and Matting

Khumalo had organised an induna committee by July 1975 that only met once. At the end of the year another African organiser was employed by the union, but Khumalo was not prepared to introduce the new organiser to the established contacts in the plant. He also tried to humiliate the organiser in front of workers because Khumalo saw him as a threat to his own position and status. (59)

Due to an accident Khumalo was confined to hospital for about two months. During that time Albertyn and Nala successfully managed to get organisation well under way at Jacobs. They established or revived four shop stewards committees at significant factories. When Khumalo returned he sensed that he had been dislodged from his dominant position in the Jacobs office. (60) At a subsequent staff meeting he was allocated new but less significant factories to concentrate on organising. (61) He disliked this change and interpreted it as an undermining of his position. (62)

Khumalo subsequently interpreted these events in racial terms and felt that White organisers were imposing themselves on him:

• Then I started to work with Humphrey Glass and John Copelyn. From 1974 to 1975 we worked hand in hand like I did with Halton Cheadle. Late in 1975 things changed. There was no understanding of each other. The White organisers became bosses of mine. They wanted to instruct me like a manager. (63)

The conflict carried on and developed into a power struggle for the dominant influence within the union between Khumalo and the other organisers. In December 1975 he tendered his resignation from the union to the BEC on the grounds that his argument with Copelyn made it impossible for him to work in the union and also that 'there was a conspiracy in the organisation to have him fired.' After a heated exchange in which the other organisers (including an African organiser) attacked Khumalo, one

alleging that he had threatened to destroy the union, another that the CMC shop stewards committee had collapsed due to Khumalo's insinuations, they absented themselves from the meeting for the BEC to take a decision. The BEC then decided that Khumalo should carry on working for the NUTW provided he carried out the decisions of the BEC meetings. Khumalo accepted these terms. The chairman of the BEC also exhorted the organisers to work together as their dispute 'was terrible for the morale of the workers.' (64)

The conflict remained deadlocked until March 1976 when a plan was made to remove Khumalo without loss of face from the NUTW and to the potential advantage of the TGWU. The acting secretary of the TGWU 'requested' the NUTW BEC to release Khumalo in order to handle complaints in the General Sector of the union. (65) The BEC agreed to this, but only after it had received what appeared to be an unequivocal assurance from Khumalo that he was completely happy with the move. (66)

Khumalo had however not revealed his true feelings and was too astute to be taken in by the plan. What he resented most was being removed from his power base in the NUTW: after his removal shop stewards from Ropes and Matting (where Khumalo was the organiser) kept disrupting meetings by alleging that he had been victimised by the union. In order to allay the shop stewards doubts on this matter two organisers, Khumalo and the chairman of the BEC attended a shop steward meeting. All went well until Khumalo contradicted the former speakers and told the shop stewards in no uncertain terms that he had been removed from the union against his will. This prevented the union from breaking through to the workers at Ropes and Matting. (67) Khumalo also encouraged workers from other Romatex factories,

namely CMC and Feltex, as well as two other factories, Consolidated Textile Mills (CTM) and Van Dyck to leave the NUTW because, according to him, they were not really told why he had been moved out of the union. (68)

Khumalo's removal from the TGWU had a particularly devastating effect at CMC because his popularity with the CMC workers was extremely high. He had played a crucial role in helping them win a work stoppage of over 24 hours in September 1975 in one department of the factory in order to have a fired shop steward reinstated. (70) The shop steward was fired for hitting a White mechanic in self-defence. Management instantly dismissed the shop steward whereupon workers refused to work by simply standing next to their machines. When management arrived, the workers demanded that the shop steward be reinstated, but management refused. This happened during the morning 8-hour shift and the same pattern repeated itself with the subsequent 3 shifts until the afternoon of the following day when the morning and afternoon shift workers all gathered together outside the factory with Khumalo mingling in the crowd. The general manager told them that he would be prepared to reinstate the shop steward, but that he would have to be suspended for two weeks first. Khumalo, hidden in the crowd, managed to persuade the manager to give a written assurance to that effect and to pay the shop steward while being suspended. He also persuaded the workers to accept the offer. The strike was a victory for the workers and it increased Khumalo's influence in the shop stewards committee. (71)

When Khumalo thereupon led the CMC shop stewards to believe that he had been fired from the union they actually refused to meet as a shop steward committee unless it was convened by him. Thus union organisation at CMC totally collapsed and by November

1976 it had a mere ten members at the company. (72)

The conflict within the NUTW around Thizi Khumalo therefore weakened the union and set back the union's organisation at a number of factories, especially at CMC and Ropes and Matting. Although his removal to the TGWU ended the conflict between organisers in the NUTW, it precipitated much larger strife subsequently in the TGWU and TUACC. (This is discussed in the chapter on the TGWU.)

### 3.3 The Managerial Counter-Offensive

Management was caught on the wrong foot by the Durban strikes in 1973. The fright they received led them to make concessions to African workers and, occasionally, to the African unions that emerged thereafter. For the NUTW the Smith and Nephew recognition and the apparent undertaking by SA Fabrics to recognise the union comprised such concessions. However, by 1974 management had marshalled their forces again and embarked on a counter-offensive against the NUTW. It consisted of promoting and establishing liaison committees in their factories as a way of keeping out trade unions. In this they were actively assisted by the Labour Department who always took sides with management against the union on any issue.

The struggle between management and the NUTW was also carried into the Industrial Council for the Textile Manufacturing Industry through the union's close links with the registered TWIU. The union's organisational efforts were also seriously advanced or retarded by the attitudes and policy towards the union on the part of top management and personnel managers. These three terrains of struggle between management and the union are considered next.

## NUTW and Liaison Committees

Management's liaison committee counter-offensive against the NUTW was well under way by March 1974. At a staff meeting of the union during that month it was noted that Wentex management had established a liaison committee, at Frametex a liaison committee was to be started the following month with a worker being approached by management to serve on it, while at Dano in Hammersdale workers were being forced to form a liaison committee. Even SA Fabrics (SAF) which had said it would 'accept' the union, favoured a liaison committee. (73)

SAF in Jacobs, which employed about 500 men to produce cloth, proved particularly difficult for the union to handle because it adopted a two-edged policy towards the NUTW. It was owned by the British Cautaulds group and after the 1973 strikes it improved workers' wages dramatically and was pushed by the holding company to enter into negotiations with the union. The local management of SAF was however strongly opposed to the union and

they did all they could to ensure that the process of negotiating an agreement with the union was fraught with delays, interruptions, and obstructions... (74)

While management engaged in a strategy of procrastination, it gave the union the impression that it was genuinely willing to recognise the union. In June 1974 the NUTW optimistically reported that it had free access to the SAF factory at all times and was going to negotiate an agreement. (75) However gradually disillusionment set in with regards to SAF. Ten months later the union still reported that it was hoping to sign an agreement with SAF, and by October 1975, when the union had reached a point of meeting fortnightly with the company, SAF was deliberately stalling negotiations. (76)

By that stage SAF worker support for the union was

dwindling. According to Albertyn this was partly due to managerial strategy of not making any concessions to the workers at times when the union was strong at the factory, but very readily making concessions when the union weakened. This confirmed in many workers' minds that improvements could be obtained by flattering management rather than fighting them. (77)

At the same time SAF management was also promoting its liaison committee. Management recognised the liaison committee as the authentic voice of the workers and could thus even afford to allow organisers access onto the premises fortnightly to hold meetings with the shop stewards in the canteen. Shop stewards on the 2-10 shift were given 45 minutes off work to attend the meeting. These meetings were largely irrelevant because of management's policy of resolving issues through the liaison committee. Finally, the lack of progress and the loss of worker support made the NUTW decide to stop organising the factory in mid-1976 and not to return until the workers approached the union for support. (78) Management's counter-offensive had won the first round against the union at SA Fabrics.

Up to 1974 there was a prevailing policy amongst the TUACC unions of boycotting liaison committees (79) even though Junerose Nala, an outstanding organiser, had suggested as early as March 1974 that the union should approach liaison committee members at SA Fabrics to become the union's shop stewards. (80) It was however not until early 1975 that the NUTW decided to switch its policy from straight boycott to a more strategic and flexible one. In cases where the union felt its organisation could be advanced by taking over a liaison committee it would try and do so. Otherwise it would boycott the committee.

An opportunity to apply its new strategy came to the union at Feltex, the industrial division of Romatex, where management had established a liaison committee, but was worried about the lack of support for the committee. The union decided to try and gain control of the liaison committee in about June 1975 and the company's personnel manager accepted a proposal from a union organiser to allow union candidates to have the inscription 'National Union of Textile Workers' beneath their photographs in the liaison committee elections. In one half of the factory union members stood for election and all those who stood were elected.

The first setback the union received was that it did not gain a working majority on the liaison committee because of the additional management nominees on the committee. The second setback was that attendance at shop stewards meetings by shop stewards serving on the liaison committee became sporadic after about four months. This meant that the union could not meaningfully discuss liaison committee issues at the shop stewards meetings.

The third setback was that the 1976 wage increase for workers at Feltex was delayed by 8 months up to August while other workers in the textile industry received their wage increases negotiated by the Industrial Council in January. Feltex had applied to the Minister of Labour for an exemption from the Industrial Council wage increase and withheld a wage increase until it came through in August. But the rank and file at Feltex was not well organised because the leaders were part of Khumalo's group. (81) The NUTW consequently advised the workers not to go on strike and informed them that the wages would be increased very soon. However, the chief responsibility for reconciling the workers to the delay fell on the shoulders of

the liaison committee. As the months dragged by without an increase the liaison committee became discredited. The union suffered as a result of this because management blamed the delay for the wage increase on the union. (82) Thus at Feltex the union's attempts to counter managerial strategy by taking control of the liaison committee ended up in failure.

The case study of Feltex illustrates the challenge and difficulty the union encountered with management's opposing strategy of promoting liaison committees. Although there were factors beyond the control of the union that accounted for its failure to utilise the liaison committee, the major significance was that the liaison committee failed to help the union establish a stable presence at Feltex.

At Feltex the Industrial Council negotiations conducted by the TWIU were beyond the control of the NUTW. A complicating factor was the fact that not only representatives from the Natal branch of the TWIU, but from all the branches of the union negotiated on the national Industrial Council Agreement. The representatives from other regions did not always share the same objectives as the Natal representatives with the result that the NUTW's plans were at times thwarted on the Industrial Council. The consequences of this complex interplay of forces on the Industrial Council are considered next.

#### The NUTW and the Industrial Council

In order to understand the interaction between the NUTW and the Industrial Council it is necessary to sketch the structural framework of the situation first. The NUTW and the TWIU Natal branch worked extremely closely together from 1973 to 1976. Organisers appointed by the TWIU were all actively engaged in

organising the NUTW as well. The Natal branch of the TWIU was part of the national union whose general secretary, Norman Daniels, resided in Cape Town where the largest branch existed with about 4000 members. The Port Elizabeth branch had some 600 members and the Durban branch had 500. (83) The union's representation on the national Industrial Council was thus dominated by the Cape Town branch.

The TWIU was the only union on the national Industrial Council for the Textile Manufacturing Industry. It negotiated an Agreement on the Council with the national employers' association on the Council. Regional Committees of the Council existed for each of the provinces where purely regional issues could be raised. (84) Because of the close relationship between the NUTW and the Natal TWIU issues regarding African workers and the NUTW were raised on the national and regional Councils.

The Frame Group's Consolidated Textile Mills (CTM) composed of Afritex and Wentex mills which both produced blankets in Jacobs-Mobeni, provide an illuminating example of how the Industrial Council was used by the NUTW and the problems that arose from doing so. (85) In 1975 CTM was employing about 5000 workers who were mostly African women. The reason why the workforce was predominantly African women was due to the company's history. In the mid-fifties the Frame Group employed mainly Indian workers and the registered TWIU was a strong union. After an Industrial Council Agreement in which the Frame Group drove a tough bargain that increased the intensity of piece-workers' effort, but without increasing their rate of pay, workers at Wentex went on a strike which lasted about two weeks and was settled by SACTU. Thereafter the Frame Group decided to break the power of the registered union by replacing organised Indian workers with unorganised African workers. (86)

In November 1975 CTM applied for an exemption from the Industrial Council Agreement to allow women to work the same overtime hours conceded to men, i.e. to extend overtime to 20 hours instead of the existing 10 hours per week. In practice the women were already working 17 hours overtime a week in addition to the normal 46 hour-week, making a total of 63 hours a week. The TWIU, as the registered union on the Council, granted the exemption for a six months trial period. At the end of that period, in May 1976, the Frame Group applied for a renewal of the exemption.

The organisers in the TWIU and NUTW had, in the meanwhile, been building up their contact with shop stewards from Afritex and decided that they would hold out for only 10 hours overtime per week even though the women were prepared to work 13 hours overtime. At the regional Industrial Council meeting the TWIU Natal representatives informed the employers that they were not willing to renew the exemption. The employers refused to accept their position until a full national Industrial Council meeting was held in July 1976. This meant that the Cape Town delegates as well as all the officials including the general secretary, Norman Daniels, would be present.

At the caucus meeting before the national Industrial Council meeting, the Cape Town delegates were well briefed on the degree to which women workers were opposed to an extension of overtime. The general secretary was also taken to a shop stewards meeting from Afritex, the better organised mill, to hear from the African workers at first hand about their opposition to the extension. As a result the union stood firm at the Industrial Council meeting which lasted for two days and reached deadlock. Management argued that the TWIU could not speak for African

workers, but that they, the managers, could. At the end it was agreed that the status quo would be retained for a month while both sides would prepare evidence of the desires and intentions of the workers.

The following day management started circulating a petition through their liaison committees at Afritex and Wentex which the workers all signed. The union also started circulating a counter-petition inside the factories, but it moved slowly because the shop stewards feared that they would be fired if they were found encouraging workers to sign a counter-petition to management. The unions realised that they would not be able to present their petition because they had far too few signatures. They therefore had to look for alternative ways of challenging management.

The organisers thereupon went into the women's position more thoroughly. They found that, while the women at Afritex and Wentex were opposed to 17 hours overtime per week they preferred to work 13 hours overtime a week in the following manner: 2 hours an evening for four nights a week (not Fridays) and 5 hours on Saturday mornings commencing at 6.15 a.m.. The crucial issue for the women was that this afforded them the opportunity to shop for one brief period a week before the supermarkets closed and to be able to spend one and a half days uninterruptedly with their families. (87)

The major fear on the part of the women was that they would be forced onto the loathed 3-shift system by management if they refused to work overtime. The organisers discovered that the women's fear was justified at Wentex where the liaison committee had taken management's petition around and threatened workers that if they did not sign it they would be put onto a 3-shift system. Furthermore, at Afritex the liaison committee members

of the departments concerned told the workers that all overtime would be cut off if they did not sign the petition.

This gave the union officials the opportunity to put their position on the issue to the workers: that they did not want to cut off overtime, but restrict it to 13 hours a week as the women requested, and that they wanted to demand time and a half payment for overtime work in excess of 10 hours instead of the existing time and a third. The union also calculated that management would not carry out the threat of switching to a 3-shift system because it would actually increase the wage bill and would remove the flexibility that management had under the existing 2-shift system with overtime.

These arguments won so much support that the workers' representatives on the liaison committee at Afritex questioned the manner in which management's appointees on the committee had canvassed the support of workers for management's petition. Although the chairman of the committee quickly dismissed the representatives' objection, the unions managed to obtain a copy of the minutes of the meeting which read that 'workers' delegates were displeased with the manner in which the consent of the workers had been obtained'.

The stage was now almost set for the Natal Regional Committee of the Industrial Council to reconvene. African workers' views were officially to be represented at the meeting by the Bantu Labour Officer as well as representatives from the liaison committees at Afritex and Wentex. On the day before the meeting Albertyn, a union organiser went through the unions' position with the Afritex liaison committee representative at the Council, Mr Manyathi, who was a union supporter.

At the Industrial Council meeting the management spokesman,

Mr Lurie, presented what he thought was irrefutable evidence of the workers support for the exemption application. He indicated that all the workers affected by the exemption had signed a petition approving the application. Mr Dlamini, chairman of the Wentex liaison committee, confirmed this and said that the options had been presented fairly to workers.

The unions then went on the attack. John Copelyn asked Dlamini whether he agreed with a specific proposal of the exemption application and it turned out that Dlamini did not know anything about that proposal. Copelyn was thus able to argue that Dlamini could not claim that the proposals had been fairly presented to the workers when he himself did not even know all the provisions of the exemption application. Chris Albertyn then argued that the position had been seriously misrepresented to workers who were either threatened with a 3-shift system or the abolition of overtime if they did not sign the petition. With the aid of the minutes of the liaison committee he maintained that workers were opposed to the way in which their support had been canvassed. The Bantu Labour Officer supported these contentions by confirming that, at Wentex, the issue had been presented to workers as a choice between a 2-shift or 3-shift system and that, at Afritex, workers were displeased with the way the petition had been presented to them.

The final blow to the Frame managers was administered when the workers representatives were asked to put forward the workers' views. Dlamini reconfirmed that workers wanted to work overtime and that they did not want a 3-shift system, thereby undermining management's position yet further. Manyathi argued convincingly that women wanted to work only 13 hours overtime and that they were opposed to the exemption application. Management's case lay in pieces with their petition firmly

discredited.

The union then presented its full set of demands most of which management acceded to after a lengthy caucus meeting. The one issue on which they would not give ground though was to pay time and a half to overtime in excess of 10 hours a week. Neither side was willing to give ground on the issue and the meeting ended with the exemption refused thereby restricting overtime for women to 10 hours. This was however not the optimal settlement desired by the women who wanted to work 13 hours overtime. This indicated a disjuncture between issues inside the factory where overtime work was the primary consideration and issues inside the Industrial Council where the wage rate was made the key focus. Reflecting on events afterwards, Albertyn felt that he had not informed Copelyn adequately of workers' feelings before the Industrial Council meeting. Albertyn also believed that he had focused too much on winning the issue itself, and too little on using the issue as the basis for organising the factories'. (88) However, the final outcome was to be what the workers wanted.

The company suspended overtime for two weeks while it reflected on what to do. Once again it turned to the national Industrial Council and announced its intention of resubmitting its exemption application to this body which it deemed to be more representative than the Regional Committee. When the national Industrial Council met around October 1976 the union accepted management's concessions as adequate and the exemption was granted subject to them. It was accepted as union strategy to press for time and a half payment at a later stage.

According to Copelyn, the Frame Group was not dependent on the Industrial Council and only prepared to put up with it as

long as it was less of an irritant than the Department of Labour. On the other hand the TWIU was crucially dependent on the Industrial Council. Consequently, whereas the NUTW was prepared to push the Frame Group to the limits of what it would endure on the Industrial Council, the national leadership of the TWIU was not. Thus the two unions divided on the issue. (89)

The strategies management adopted towards African workers and the NUTW, whether through liaison committees or on the Industrial Council, depended on the orientation of senior management and personnel managers. This aspect of the managerial strategy is considered next.

#### NUTW and Management: the NCWM Strike

The attitude and policy of management played a crucial role in determining the NUTW's success in penetrating a factory. This was frequently, but not always, carried out through personnel managers. A managing director or personnel manager favourably disposed to the union could do a considerable amount to ease the union's entry and help it gain recognition while very hostile management could actually make it impossible for the union to gain a foothold in the company.

At Smith and Nephew, where the union rapidly gained recognition, a senior factory manager, Mr Kinder, was sympathetic towards the union and 'fought hard to maintain a union presence in the factory.' (90) He was prepared to make concessions where workers had grievances and was sometimes invited to the monthly shop steward meetings inside the factory to discuss workers' problems. (91) A good spirit of cooperation existed through a real process of negotiation. Production was higher because workers knew why decisions were made and there was less need for supervision. The union tried to prevent strikes among the

workers because it tried to make management in Durban more favourably disposed towards the NUTW by showing that the union could play a disciplining function. (92) The close co-operation between Smith and Nephew and the NUTW during this period demonstrates the effectiveness to the company of a well-administered human relations approach.

A completely different situation faced the NUTW at Natal Cotton and Woollen Mills (NCWM) in Jacobs during 1975. The company, which was started as a private company by Mr Daitz and had the Swiss Holding Bank as the majority share holder, employed a labour force of 650 workers, all male, 150 of which were Indians. It initially adopted a benevolent paternalistic attitude towards its labour force and paid wages considerably above the Industrial Council minima. This was largely due to the policy of the managing director, Mr V.Daitz (son of the founder of NCWM), who ran the company as a family business and could be approached directly by workers. The registered TWIU also had a good relationship with the firm. The company had had no strike for 18 years (93); even during 1973 and 1974 it experienced no strike except for a brief work stoppage in 1974 which led to a wage increase. (94)

Two separate but interrelated developments gradually changed the company's policy from benevolent paternalism to authoritarian labour control. The one was the rapid promotion of Mr Johnson from quality control officer to production manager and company director. (95) Johnson was in favour of strict control of labour and opposed to trade unions at the company. He wanted to promote a racially segregated liaison committee in the place of the NUTW.

The second development was the organisational strengthening

of the NUTW at NCWM during 1975. It acquired a signed up membership of about 200 African workers by October 1975. (96) A shop steward committee was elected with representatives from each department while, at the same time, pursuing a policy of boycotting the liaison committee. The boycott continued successfully for almost 6 months with the workers demanding the recognition of the shop steward committee instead. (97)

In another development the registered TWIU forced an across-the-board twelve and a half per cent wage increase during 1975 for the whole industry through the Industrial Council. This hit the NCWM doubly hard because they were paying substantially higher wages than their competitors and they had many long service workers who were earning yet higher wages. The managing director Daitz felt the TWIU had treated his company unfairly and subsequently moved closer towards Johnson's position. (98)

The strengthening of the NUTW organisation at NCWM and its non-racial alignment with the TWIU, led workers to adopt a more aggressive approach to resolve grievances during 1975. They engaged in a series of brief work stoppages at NCWM to enforce their demands. They were generally conducted in the following way:

After tea, for example, all the workers of a department, usually the weavers, the leading force in the factory, would sit at their machines and refuse to start work. The departmental manager and the production manager...would hear workers' grievances, and usually either rectify the matter or promise a reply by a definite date. If no reply was forthcoming by that date a stoppage would again follow, and the management would be forced to make the required adjustment. The tactic was well coordinated with the night shift so that the same issues were asserted by both shifts through a similar method. (99)

The company decided to confront the liaison committee boycott and work stoppages head on, so they dismissed the existing personnel manager who was fairly open to union

approaches, and appointed a virulently hostile opponent to the unions, Mr C.J. Steenkamp, brother of the head of the Natal Security Police.

Steenkamp rapidly proceeded on a policy of worker repression and trade union destruction in the company. He fired employees who appeared to be the leading spokesmen of the workers. When he fired two workers for questioning the manner in which he planned the liaison committee elections, workers' resolve became temporarily depleted. So the union adopted a quick switch in policy by ending the liaison committee boycott and trying to dominate it by participating in the committee elections. (100) The new personnel manager also hired 80 new workers from the firm where he was previously employed. These constituted a serious threat to the old employees: over a 3 months period ending in October 1975 he dismissed 20 long service employees. In some cases workers feared that he was bringing in his own "izimpimpi" (spies). (101)

Steenkamp did a great many other things that angered the workers and united them in bitter opposition to him. He insulted workers with racist and coarse language. Chris Albertyn, the union organiser, was also allegedly abused, insulted and manhandled by Steenkamp. The personnel manager instructed the liaison committee representatives not to report back to the workers of their departments. (102)

Finally, the African workers organised a strike which the union organisers only heard of 4 days before it occurred on Monday, 27 October, 1975, and tried in vain to suggest a work stoppage to the workers. (103) After the morning tea break on 27 October, African workers stayed on in the canteen while a list of grievances against Steenkamp was handed to Johnson. He thereupon met the workers, but refused to dismiss Steenkamp as

the workers demanded. The workers refused to return to work and were all dismissed. About 200 policemen who had been filing into the company's stores department while the meeting was taking place, remained there until all the workers had left the premises. (104)

The workers remained on strike for 14 days, one of the longest in the textile industry's history. (105) The union supported the workers in strategic ways. It held union meetings, it arranged a system of surreptitious pickets to guard the factory gates each day to persuade workers not to go to the factory, but rather to attend union meetings. The union also provided substantial loans to union members in desperate financial circumstances. (106)

The union was quite successful in its picketing of the NCWM because 11 days after the strike only 53 workers had returned to work and 63 new ones were taken on. (107) This helped force management's hand into negotiating with the TWIU. On 6 November they agreed, through the Regional Committee of the Industrial Council, that Daitz would meet with Daniels to try and reach a settlement. The outcome was that Steenkamp would be fired, but not immediately so that the company would not appear to have acceded to the workers' demands. Workers who were to be re-employed would not have their service broken nor would they have their wages cut. Daitz was however not prepared to give an undertaking that all the workers out on strike would be re-employed. The union organisers encouraged workers to accept this settlement because they had won their principal demand. Workers were however not prepared to return to work unless they were all taken back. (108)

On 10 November the strike collapsed as most workers

unexpectedly streamed back to the factory. This left about 150 of the more steadfast union members who remained out and still wanted to negotiate the total re-employment of all workers in a vulnerably exposed position. Only 15 of them were subsequently re-employed. (109)

Early in 1976 Steenkamp was dismissed. His appointment and his removal had cost the NUTW its organisational base at the company as well as the loss of jobs for about 135 of the most stalwart members of the union. (110) The whole episode demonstrated the crucial importance of the attitude and policy of the personnel manager and top management towards the union.

A brief sequel to these events at NCWM served to underline the importance of the personnel manager to the union once again. Steenkamp's successor, Mr Weedman, believed that employees worked better when they had good wages and working conditions, and if a real avenue existed for reporting and discussing grievances. He brought about substantial improvements in the workers' canteen, their industrial training, and dealt with individual workers' grievances to the union's satisfaction. He supported the suggestion by Albertyn to establish a registered union shop steward committee which would meet him monthly with a union official present. Then, once the registered TWIU's presence had been firmly re-established, to attempt to reorganise the shop steward committee on a non-racial basis to represent African workers as well. As a result of this a TWIU shop steward committee was revived. Then Weedman held a meeting with senior management where he proposed the re-entry of the union into the factory's labour relations system. After a considerable argument with Johnson he resigned on the grounds that he was not prepared to work in a factory where workers were not given adequate representation. Thereupon the Indian workers'

participation in the TWIU dwindled at NCWM and African worker organisation as the company came to an end. (111) This lasted for at least 3 years: by October 1979 the factory had not been reorganised yet although the union was trying to do so. (112)

The managerial counter-offensive was not the only opposition the NUTW encountered. The state was also continuously on the offensive against the union.

#### 3.4 State Offensive and Consequences 1976

In May 1976 the state detained Junerose Nala and Obed Zuma, secretary and organiser of the NUTW respectively under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. Both of them were organising in the Pinetown region and their removal struck a blow to organisation in that area. The loss of Nala and Zuma was offset to some extent by Pat Horn who replaced them temporarily, but before Nala and Zuma were released after being in detention for 7 months, she, Copelyn and Albertyn were banned for 5 years in November 1976. The union was thus left without any of its experienced and leading organisers. Only J Dubazane, who had commenced as an organiser in December 1975, was left. But here too the state was at work, albeit surreptitiously: in October 1978 he was expelled from the NUTW and TUACC for being seen on a number of occasions with Security Police members. (113)

A consequence of the banning was that the general secretary of the TWIU, Norman Daniels, took steps to separate the TWIU from the NUTW by proposing that the TWIU office be moved away from the NUTW. He was also opposed to the TWIU working closely with TUACC on the grounds that the TWIU was affiliated to TUCSA. On the other hand the BEC of the TWIU Natal branch continued to remain in favour of the close relationship with the NUTW. (114)

Indian members of the TWIU at Smith and Nephew felt the same

about the matter. They were angered by a visit on the part of Daniels to management in March 1977 without, in their opinion, adequately consulting local organisers or shop stewards beforehand. As a result of these events, and with local encouragement and organisational support, they resigned from the TWIU and joined the NUTW. By May 1977 the entire TWIU membership at Smith and Nephew, about 60 Indian workers, had become members of the NUTW. (115)

These events were to be decisive in wrenching the two unions apart. Smith and Nephew management also seized the dispute between the unions as one of their excuses for announcing that they would not renew their Agreement with the NUTW shortly before it expired on 18 July 1977. For the following 14 months the union mobilised most of its resources in a struggle to make Smith and Nephew reverse its decision. This also heralded the commencement of the period when the NUTW concentrated on in-depth workplace organisation at a small number of factories.

#### 4. Phase of In-Depth Organisation 1977 - 1979

##### 4.1 Struggle at Smith and Nephew

Shortly after the bannings of NUTW officials in November 1976, Smith and Nephew management suggested to union officials that the shop stewards committee be changed into a statutory works committee. According to the union, management argued that it would reduce pressure being applied by the State which was a major market for them (particularly for surgical dressings, plasters etc).

The union opposed the proposal and the matter was left in abeyance for the time being. Then, on 9 May 1977, the NUTW received a letter from Smith and Nephew management indicating the company's intention not to continue with the 'Gentleman's

Agreement' which the company had with the TWIU and the NUTW 'since these two unions would now appear to be in open dispute.' (116)

This sparked off the struggle between Smith and Nephew and the NUTW. Smith and Nephew's initial strategy was to try and reintroduce the TWIU into the company and to set up a liaison committee for African workers. (117) But management soon realised the futility of trying to secure a foothold for the TWIU amongst workers, as well as its defenceless position against overseas critics if it established a racially segregated liaison committee sanctioned by the South African state. The NUTW conducted an informall poll amongst workers in July on whether they wanted the union or a liaison committee to represent them. (118) The result was overwhelmingly against the liaison committee. While none of the workers voted in favour of the liaison committee, over 430 of the 700 employees wanted the Agreement with the union to stand. (119)

Cosnequently Smith and Nephew announced a new strategy in August 1977. It intended to set up a non-racial Works Council which would have Indian and African workers as well as management representatives. It was clearly intended to replace the NUTW and management put heavy pressure on workers to cooperate with the Works Council while making every effort to disestablish the union at Smith and Nephew.

Because the shop stewards committee refused to cooperate, management set up an Advisory Group onto which it invited four shop stewards in their personal capacities to discuss the draft constitution of the Works Council. The remaining six members of the Advisory Group were managerial and supervisory men. At a shop stewards meeting it was decided that the four shop stewards should participate on the Advisory Group in order to try and

protect the workers' rights. (120) In late October the Managing Director, Mr. K.Lunn, and other senior management went round the factory from department to department and, according to the union,

instructed the workers to nominate representatives to the Works Council. Lunn threatened that if there was no Works Council then there would be no wage increases. Even more serious were clear threats that people in any way interfering with the nominations would be dismissed and the police called. (121)

Throughout all this time the union was actively organising against every move made by management. It regularly demanded meetings with management to discuss and argue with them about their plans. The union secretary Obed Zuma and the shop stewards resolutely defended the right of workers to be represented by their own union. The union issued newsheets, Textile Forum, to workers in order to keep them informed on developments.

In spite of opposition from the majority of workers, management went ahead with nominations and the election of a Works Council in November. The union claimed that a majority of the nominees had their names placed on the ballot by management. One worker who was chairman of the shop stewards committee, Moffat Sabela, considered taking legal action to have his name removed from the list of nominees for the Council election. The outcome was that 353 of the company's 533 African employees as well as 68 of the 120 Indian productive workers (a further 94 were clerks) boycotted the Works Council elections. At the first meeting of the 11-member Council on 11 November three of the seven African representatives announced that they wanted to resign on the grounds that the election had shown that a sizeable majority of the shop floor workers had rejected it. (122)

*Wah*

Smith and Nephew was also trying to give the impression that none of the workers' rights had really changed, and that it could do more for its workers in terms of housing than it was allowed to do under the Agreement. This information was particularly aimed at Britain and Europe. (123) As a subsidiary of the British Smith and Nephew Associated Companies, it was mindful of pressures that could be exerted on it from various quarters such as the British TUC and trade unions.

Consequently, in addition to mobilising workers on the shop floor against Smith and Nephew's strategy, the NUTW put a great deal of energy into conducting an international campaign against the company. Between July and October 1977 the unions wrote four detailed reports on Smith and Nephew that were sent to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) and the British TUC. In October it also sent a petition to the TUC signed by 491 workers in Smith and Nephew in Pinetown requesting the TUC and British trade unions organising in Smith & Nephew to help them in their struggle for union recognition as a matter of urgency. (124)

However, it soon became apparent to the NUTW that no meaningful international pressure was being applied on Smith and Nephew. In November 1977 the union accordingly switched its approach and decided to inform unions that were directly represented at the British parent company. This change in tactics soon bore fruit as members of British unions such as the Amalgamated Textile Workers' Union took up the issue of NUTW recognition at their plants.

The most significant development took place at the Smith and Nephew plant at Nelson where shop stewards circulated a petition

on the shop floor calling on management to recognise the NUTW. This alarmed Smith and Nephew management at Nelson where 70% of the union members were Pakistanis who supported the petition strongly. The company thereupon called on the TUC to try and stop the petition.

Before the end of the year the new approach of the NUTW bore fruit. While in Britain to report to the parent company, the Pinetown managing director of Smith and Nephew met with the chairman of the parent company and a TUC representative. They prevailed upon him to reinstate the lapsed Agreement. In a statement issued after the meeting, Smith and Nephew reaffirmed its willingness to continue with the 1974 Agreement and to negotiate with the union on the basis of the Agreement until legislation based on the Wiehahn Commission had been passed. (125)

The NUTW remained sceptical of management's intentions and continued its struggle to have the Agreement renewed without letting up. The struggle entered a new phase when negotiations commenced in January 1978 between top management in Smith and Nephew and the secretary of the NUTW assisted by the general secretary of TUACC, Alec Erwin. Although shop stewards were involved to some extent they did not participate directly in the negotiations that stretched over an eight month period. Consequently negotiations were even tougher than they would otherwise have been. For instance, it enabled a company director to make the misplaced complaint to the union negotiators that

whilst the Union had expressed the sentiment that they would like to help us solve a problem which we obviously have, the Company felt that the Union were being governed by the view of the shop stewards rather than the Company viewpoint. (126)

The negotiators gained and lost some ground for the union.

They also had to be on their guard against management's firm intention to carry on with the Works Council and remove as many issues as they could from the scope of the Agreement by placing them in the hands of the Council instead. The areas in which ground was gained for the union were: increasing the role and responsibilities of the shop stewards in the factory, most notably the right of shop stewards to be involved in changes of work practice. In addition shop stewards were given the right to hold meetings amongst themselves and with employees on the site in their own time; a tightening up of the dismissal procedure before management could fire a worker; a retrenchment clause on the basis of the last-in-first-out principle, but on a sectional basis; and preferential re-employment for women who leave employment to have a child.

The areas in which the negotiators lost ground were the denial of access onto company premises at a set time during the week - 'reasonable' access with management's approval was the most they could obtain for the union. The annual two and a half per cent 'standard of living increase' was also scrapped for increases based on improvements of productivity. (127) In retrospect Erwin considered that he and Zuma

made a very fundamental and bad mistake of getting trapped into the two of us negotiating so that we lost political issues in the renegotiated Agreement and in particular we lost access which was bad. We got conditional access which we subsequently lost disastrously because it's never even been made use of. (128)

Even the most significant gain made in the negotiations was lost because of the lack of active shop steward participation:

We did a few positive things; we won the right of shop stewards to be involved in changes of work practice. I think a very significant advance if it had been made use of, but it's been a disaster: it just hasn't been used. (129)

The renegotiated Agreement between Smith and Nephew and the NUTW was finally consented to on 27 Sept 1978. Even though the company retained the Works Council, the union shop stewards committee was re-asserting itself: in November 1979, the shop stewards opposed a proposal by management that the union should not confer with the shop stewards before the new wage increases were announced. (130)

Although the NUTW's organisational efforts concentrated heavily on Smith and Nephew during 1977 and 1978, a small number of other factories were also being organised. The organisation of these factories as well as the stage of development of the union are considered next.

#### 4.2. The NUTW in 1979

In October 1979 the NUTW, although small in terms of its potential membership in Natal, was a relatively large union in FOSATU in the Natal region. It had approximately 6000 signed up and 1000 paid up members. Monthly subscriptions from members ranged between R700 and R950. The deficit of expenditure over revenue was met by FOSATU. Although it was an open non-racial union, the NUTW was still predominantly African: it had about 220 Indian members 215 of which were from Smith and Nephew and 5-10 from SA Fabrics. About half the members were in the Pinetown area while the remaining half were evenly divided between Jacobs and Hammarsdale.

The union was concentrating on organising a few factories in-depth: with four organisers (including the secretary) it was organising ten factories at the time. The secretary regarded a factory to be well-organised when it had a majority of members and a shop stewards group functioning properly. By these criteria he considered four factories to be well-organised.

These were Smith and Nephew, Frametex, Consolidated Woolwashing and Processing Mills (CWPM) and SAF. (131) The state of organisation of these four companies are briefly considered below.

Shop stewards committees operated at all four these companies. The four committees comprised 67 shop stewards who were all elected on an annual basis except for Smith and Nephew where they could hold office for three years. The shop stewards committees met weekly; usually they were brought to the union offices with union transport.

Although the union had abandoned organising SAF in mid-1976 after a long and fruitless struggle to gain recognition, it had commenced reorganising SAF again and was once more involved in a struggle for recognition with the company. By 1979 a familiar pattern was playing itself off. The company had a liaison committee which it was in the process of changing into a works council. The union and its members rejected the works council and were insisting on recognition of the union and the shop stewards committee instead. SAF management, as in the past, were using stalling tactics against the union. After months of correspondence the union organisers and shop stewards met with management on 31 October 1979. The union claimed 60-70% membership, but management advanced the excuse that they could not recognise the union yet because certain departments had consisted mainly of Indian workers who were not union members. (132)

At CWPM, where organisation had commenced again early in 1978, the union experienced severe repression of its members. Towards the end of the year management became aware that the union was organising once more and embarked on an intensive

campaign against the union's members. Management intimidated and threatened union members, they searched members and confiscated their union cards. Finally the union proceeded with litigation against the company, but a settlement was reached out of court. In the settlement CWPM acknowledged the right of workers to be active in the union and undertook 'not to take any steps to interfere with or discourage any such activities.' (133)

Frametex was characterised by good and able worker leadership and was organisationally carried by the shop stewards committee. In late June 1979 the union secretary became aware of a dispute between management and the shop stewards committee over wages. Early in July 500 workers downed tools in demand of higher wages. (134) Frame tried to address the workers, but they refused to give him a hearing, so the chairman of the shop stewards committee, Jabulani Gwala, was requested to talk to the workers. Gwala's first act was to obtain an undertaking from the workers that they would remain together and not allow management to fire anybody. The shop stewards committee then negotiated with Frame that if he could give an undertaking that he would not fire anybody and agree to a wage increase, Gwala would be prepared to try and persuade the workers to return to work. The outcome was that a wage increase due in six months' time was brought forward to September and none of the striking workers were fired. (135)

Gwala, who was also chairman of the union's BEC, was one of the worker leaders who had emerged in the NUTW by 1979. Although it was generally felt that he handled the strike well, he subsequently said that he still needed to learn how to conduct a strike and what to say and do during a strike. He was of the opinion that shop stewards could organise a factory better than an organiser could: whereas shop stewards knew the work situation

intimately, an organiser had to ask many questions and did not know what the difficulties were in approaching management. (136)

#### 5. Summary and Conclusion: the NUTW up to November 1979

The NUTW remained a relatively stable union throughout the period under consideration in spite of the fact that its membership and organisation at factories fluctuated. Three factors were predominantly responsible for this. The first was the recognition the union obtained at Smith and Nephew very early in its history. The Agreement helped the union to maintain a presence at the factory and to sustain continuous organisation even during difficult periods in the union's history.

The second was the continuous presence of capable organisers and assistants, many of whom were White intellectuals, in the union. The White intellectuals played a crucial role in shaping union policy and strategy in the face of managerial and state hostility. Junerose Nala rapidly played a similar type of role in the union while Obed Zuma provided steady and competent leadership to the union once he became secretary. Thizi Khumalo also emerged as a powerful worker leader, but with his own brand of trade unionism. As a result he constituted such a threat to the NUTW that he had to be removed.

The third reason was the emergence of able and reliable shop stewards in various factories. Although the impressive committee at CMC fell away with the removal of Khumalo, others remained thereby creating a continuity of worker leaders such as Moffat Sabela at Smith and Nephew and Jabulani Gwala at Frametex.

Three phases could clearly be observed in the history of the NUTW between 1973 and 1979. The first phase was one of mass membership recruitment and lasted up to the first half of 1974

even though membership maintained an upward momentum for another year. It was due to the high worker militancy in Durban and the mass demand on the workers' part for their own organisation. According to Copelyn, notwithstanding the renewed wave of strikes in January 1974, the banning of Halton Cheadle a week after the strikes sufficiently disorganised the union to start the demise of its organisation. (137)

The second phase was one of transition for the NUTW and lasted up to the end of 1976. It was a response to the decline in union membership and its inability to win any meaningful rights for workers in the factories. The union was not making any lasting organisational gains and a change in strategy was required. The new strategy formulated by the union was to try and organise inside the factories by concentrating on the workplace and giving shop stewards a central role in the union. Although the strategy had been worked out in theory in 1974 it was to take three years before it was fully and properly put into practice. This was partly because some of the organisers were not committed to the new approach as well as a number of setbacks which the NUTW experienced during the transition period.

The setbacks up to late 1976 were the severe slump in the textile industry from about September 1974 to March 1975, the expulsion of three Black Consciousness organisers in January 1975, the conflict between Thizi Khumalo and other organisers from about September 1975 until his removal in March 1976, the detention for seven months of Junerose Nala and Obed Zuma from May to December 1976, and the banning of three White organisers in the union in November 1976. Throughout this period management also engaged in a counter-offensive against the union. Given that some of these events overlapped, it has been impossible to disentangle the consequences of these setbacks neatly from each

other. Copelyn however suggested that these events effected the NUTW in the following way: the union managed to hold its own against the managerial counter-offensive until the slump in the textile industry and the inner turmoil in the union led to a decline in union membership. The union however received a sharp blow with the detention of Nala and Zuma which was exacerbated further with the banning of three of its organisers. Thus at the end of 1976 the NUTW was at its lowest ebb since being founded. (138)

The third phase from 1977 to 1979 was one of in-depth organisation concentrating on a few factories and giving shop stewards a central role in the union. During this period the union concentrated a vast amount of its resources on Smith and Nephew and was successful in forcing the company to renew its agreement with the union.

By 1979 the NUTW had achieved non-racial policies and practices, worker controlled structures although organisers and FOSATU advisers still remained influential in the union. The BEC had been built up into a stable institution overseeing the affairs of the union. The union also had a strong shop stewards base at four of the factories. In addition there were a couple of shop stewards committees, notably at Smith & Nephew and Frametex, where competent worker leadership had been established.

## Chapter 4

### The Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) 1973-1979

#### 1. Formation of MAWU 1973

From August to September 1972 an attempt was made by former SACTU trade unionist to revive the organisation, but the idea was abandoned due to police harrassment. It was then decided to cooperate with the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund and the Wages Commissions. Thus it came about that Alpheus Mthethwa started working with the Wages Commission in Durban. In the Durban strikes which erupted in January 1973 no less than 22 factories in the metal industry experienced strikes. (1) Mthethwa then started organising metal factories with a view to forming a union. (2) These efforts were to bear fruit and lead to the formation of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU).

On 28 April 1973 a Caretaker Committee was established in Durban as a forerunner to a BEC of the nascent MAWU. The first BEC meeting of the Durban branch of MAWU was held on 10 November 1973. It consisted of representatives from three factories including Leylands and Non-Ferrous Metal Works. The meeting was directed by David Davis from the Wages Commission who explained the structure and function of the BEC to the members present. After the election of office-bearers Alpheus Mthethwa was appointed as secretary and organiser of the branch.

The formation of a branch of MAWU in Pietermaritzburg had separate, but related roots. Dave Hemson started organising textile workers in Pietermaritzburg. At the same time he started up the GFWBF with the assistance of the Pietermaritzburg Wages Commission, particularly Mike Murphy. In the process of organising the GFWBF Hemson started meeting a group of metal

workers from Alcan Aluminium and Scottisch Cables. (3) Workers from these two factories formed the basis of the BEC of a Pietermaritzburg branch of MAWU that was founded on 16 June 1973. Moses Mbanjwa was appointed secretary/organiser while Halton Cheadle and Jeanette Cunningham-Brown were given signing powers for the subscription receipt books. (4)

## 2. Early Militancy of MAWU 1974-1975

MAWU grew rapidly as a result of the high worker militancy following the Durban strikes. In January 1974 it collected R1254 in subscriptions which indicated a paid up membership of about 1440 workers. (5) By June 1974 it had 2327 signed up members in Durban and claimed to be well established in at least seven firms, while in Pietermaritzburg it claimed to have 1556 members distributed over no less than 55 factories. (6)

The union quickly sought recognition from companies, but was met by the response from management that they had works and liaison committees to represent the workers and that management did not want outside interference. This was part of a managerial counter-offensive that the union had to face repeatedly. The Durban BEC therefore initially adopted a policy of opposition and total boycott of works and liaison committees in December 1973. The BEC resolved that union members serving on such committees had to resign from them. (7)

The early period of MAWU was characterised by aggressive action on the part of its members. The union therefore experienced some significant strikes and disputes up to 1975 when worker militancy was still high. The union was also confronted with managerial hostility and state repression during this period. It therefore did not enjoy smooth and uninterrupted

growth over this time. To illustrate this the experiences of MAWU at five of the companies it organised during this period are considered.

The union's first encounters with the managerial counter-offensive were at Glacier Bearings and Caravans International. Glacier Bearings in Pinetown was one of the companies that MAWU officials approached for recognition in September 1973 when about 80 of the 150 African employees belonged to the union. Within days of the union's approach the company obtained a copy of the liaison committee constitution drafted by the Labour Department. It set up a liaison committee and used it as an excuse for not recognising the union. The high worker militancy combined with the inefficacy of the liaison committee led to a strike at Glacier Bearings by African workers on 25 January 1974 in demand of higher wages which had been promised for early January, but had not been forthcoming. The workers won only a small fraction of the wage increase they demanded: instead of gaining an increase to R30 per week, the minimum wage for trainees was increased from R15,64 to R17,64 per week. (8)

At Caravans International management set up a works committee after the 1973 Durban strikes and the union started organising the firm in the middle of the same year. As an organising strategy Mthethwa went to work there as a tocht worker, but was fired by lunch time of the first day of his employment for recruiting workers to the union. (9) In November 1973, when the union had acquired 30% membership, it approached management for recognition, but they claimed that the works committee was fully representative of the workers and that they would not tolerate outside interference. Union organisation at the company fell away soon afterwards. (10)

The state however struck a blow at MAWU on 31 January 1974

when it banned David Davis and Jeanette Cunningham-Brown. This led to an organisational slump at some, but not all, of the factories organised by the union. In particular organisation and membership at Glacier Bearings fell away for three years before organisation there was revived in 1977. (11)

Leyland Motor Corporation was one of the factories where union agitation and worker aggression carried on regardless of state repression. The union pressed ahead with a demand for recognition by the company, but ran up against managerial intransigence. (12) Three months after an organisational drive commencing in June 1973 at Leyland in Mobeni, the union acquired 95% membership of the African work force. In August the union wrote to the managing director of Leyland requesting recognition of the union. It received a reply that the company would implement 'the procedure for communication between employer and employee as laid down in the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act' and would not recognise MAWU either formally or informally.

The company proceeded to try and change an existing non-statutory works committee into a statutory liaison committee with the aid of the Labour Department. In January 1974 the workers however refused to cooperate and boycotted the elections for the liaison committee. They continued stressing that they were all members of MAWU and demanded representation through the union. Finally matters were driven to a head by the union. On 4 March 1974 workers demanded a reply from management to a memorandum written to Leyland demanding a referendum to ascertain the true feelings of the workers. Management responded that they were not willing to accede to the request. Workers thereupon downed tools while remaining on the premises. On the advice of the Labour Department the company fired 104 of the 177 striking

workers. (13)

Mindful of potential overseas criticism, the company decided to negotiate with the union. The financial director, Dr F Jacobz requested a meeting with the union secretary. At this meeting the company appeared to give in to the union's demands. Dr Jacobz indicated that Leyland would probably negotiate with MAWU and that the workers who had been fired would be reinstated by 11 March. The company even went as far as signing an agreement with the union stating that it would accept shop stewards of the union on the works committee provided they were called 'workers' delegates'. The impression was created that Leyland's intention was to recognise the union and their decision was heralded as a 'great leap forward' by the Financial Mail. Even the union's secretary hailed the event as 'quite a victory'.

(14)

But Leyland had engaged in a strategy of destroying the union at the plant while giving the impression of recognising it. Under the pretext that it had to engage in retrenchments due to the recession in the British motor industry, it ended up dismissing 65 of its previous employees. In the process the company carefully weeded out the strongest and most influential trade unionists. Four of the six elected 'worker-delegates', some of whom had been with the company for 8 to 10 years, were fired.

So what appeared to be the beginnings of recognition of the union by management was in fact a clever tactic on the part of management to crush the union. (15)

The union managed to hold the dismissed workers together for a while by starting up a relief fund financed by the union and Leyland workers. Attempts by management afterwards to employ new workers were successfully hampered by the union and workers on occasion, but management had effectively succeeded in breaking

the back of the union at Leyland. In this they were assisted by the repressive arm of the state. Attempts to nationalise the union's representation at Leyland by organising the Elandsfontein plant on the Witwatersrand in November 1974, led to the 14 hour detention and interrogation of the union secretary and Pindile Mfethi, an organiser in the Metal Wing of the Johannesburg-based IAS, by the security police. This event, plus the instant victimisation of a union recruiter in the Elandsfontein plant, made it impossible for the union to carry on organising the Leyland Motor Corporation.

The Leyland dispute held in one advantage for MAWU. When the union was founded it experienced hostility from the UTP-serviced Engineering and Allied Workers' Union (EAWU) based in Transvaal for starting up a rival union. (16) Subsequently its initial application for affiliation to the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF) was not successful because the unions concerned informed the IMF that MAWU was not representative of African workers. (17) However, it was impressed by the Leyland strike and invited MAWU to affiliate. As a result MAWU became a member of the South African Consultative Committee (SACC) of the IMF, a body that Werner Thonessen, assistant general secretary of the IMF, initiated at the 1974 TUCSA Conference in Port Elizabeth. (18)

MAWU's relationship with EAWU remained tense, especially when the IAS Metal Wing, which had a close relationship with MAWU, openly started organising in the metal industry on the Witwatersrand in 1975. Discussions on amalgamation of MAWU and EAWU bore no fruit because there was not sufficient trust on either side. (19) On the other hand an IAS delegation held a meeting with MAWU on 24 May 1975 where it was decided to

establish a Co-ordinating Committee with representatives from the Metal Wing of the IAS and MAWU because it was considered to be premature to form a national union. At the meeting MAWU also spelled out its policy towards the IMF Consultative Committee:

MAWU had used its discretion and caution in affiliating to IMF with a view to continuing its membership as long as the going is good, but it would not hesitate to pull out if things became difficult. This argument was reinforced by the reason that if MAWU decided to stay out of the Consultative without any motivation nothing would be gained except allowing the right-wing and conservative unions cashing in financial and moral support provided by this body. This would not only make these unions strong and effective, but MAWU would find the competition very hard to withstand as it will be in isolation. (20)

During 1975 there was still some attacking spirit left in workers who had joined MAWU. They entered into two big disputes, the one at Defy Industries in May and the other at Conac Engineering during September and October. The outcome of both conflicts were however detrimental to the union.

MAWU started organising at Defy in Jacobs during 1974 and by May 1975, when the dispute occurred, the union had recruited about half of the 45 African workers in the Assembly Department. (21) The 65 Indian workers in the same Department were members of the registered Engineering Workers Industrial Union (Natal Branch). MAWU initially tried to do away with a liaison committee at Defy, but when that did not succeed the union switched its strategy by trying to advance its organisation through the committee. As a result union members were elected onto the liaison committee. (22) Frustrations however built up over management's tardiness in taking up issues raised by the liaison committee. One of these issues was the production bonus.

Management at Defy had become dissatisfied with the existing production bonus system in the Assembly Department after a move to a new workshop where assembly workers' productivity increased

due to technological advances such as air-operated screwdrivers. As a result workers in the Assembly Department were earning more than workers in other departments. In the words of management, this led to an 'artificial standard of living' because bonus earnings had become 'unrealistic'. Management's hands were however tied by an existing Industrial Council Agreement which specified that they could not alter the existing incentive bonus scheme unless they had come to a mutual agreement with their employees.

In mid-April management introduced a new arrangement that assembly workers would receive a bonus based only on the stoves that had passed the quality control tests. The Assembly Department workers agreed under protest and on the proviso that they would not be penalised for defects arising in earlier stages of production.

Matters came to a head on 16 May 1975 when workers received only approximately half the bonus they would have received under the old bonus system. They could not work out why their bonus earnings had dropped so radically and felt that they were being unfairly penalised for defects not of their making. When they queried the matter they were issued with an ultimatum either to accept the new bonus system unconditionally and indefinitely or to leave. Faced with such a choice, the 45 African and 65 Indian workers of the Assembly Department thereupon left their work.

The African and Indian workers first went to the registered Engineering Workers' Industrial Union to which the Indian workers belonged. They tried to gain the support of the union to advance the claims which had been initiated up to then by the African workers, but were told that the secretary was away on holiday and nothing could be done. Management proceeded to

lower the effective earnings of workers by scrapping the bonus system and raising the basic wage to the approximate level of earnings before workers' productivity increased. They also dismissed 19 of the workers including their leader and spokesman, Mr Phungula, after performing aptitude tests on the workers. The end result of the dispute was that management had succeeded in raising productivity without raising the wage bill whereas the workers had lost their struggle and MAWU's organisation at Defy came to an end.

The Conac Engineering dispute indicated the range of forces mustered on the side of management against MAWU and its African worker members. (23) In mid-1973 management set up a system of racially segregated liaison committees in the factory. The African liaison committee had four elected worker representatives and three indunas appointed by management serving on the committee. From the beginning of 1974 there was a marked increase in the manufacture of steel at the factory, but only a small increase in the number of African workers. As a result there was a sharp increase in overtime worked by them. In some cases as much as 38 hours overtime had been worked per week. All aspects of the factory's activities were covered by the Iron, Steel and Metallurgical Industries Industrial Council Agreement which were extended to include work performed by African workers in the factory. The overtime clause in the Agreement stated that overtime work was voluntary and this clause also covered African workers. In 1973 and 1974 the elected worker representatives on the liaison committee persistently asked management to reduce the amount of overtime worked over weekends. They also complained of being forced to work overtime. The representatives' requests largely fell on deaf ears. The

only concession they obtained was an agreement by management to set aside one Saturday per month when workers would not work overtime.

In July 1975 some African workers from Conac Engineering approached MAWU for assistance. After a few weeks about one quarter of the 110 African workers employed at Conac had joined the union and a shop steward group was formed. A union organiser made the workers aware of their rights under the Industrial Council Agreement and that the maximum overtime allowed under the Industrial Council Agreement was 10 hours per week. The shop stewards attempted in September to call a meeting of the liaison committee that had not met since January 1975. They managed to obtain a meeting scheduled for 6 October 1975, but before the meeting seven African workers were fired on 22 September for not working overtime on the previous Saturday. This exacerbated the workers' general grievance at being forced to work overtime.

At the liaison committee meeting of 6 October the representatives appeared to be very docile and only queried the overtime rates paid by management. They did however obtain permission to speak to workers. At a general meeting held that afternoon the workers instructed the committee to inform management that they would not be working overtime on the coming Saturday. The majority of African workers subsequently boycotted overtime work on Saturday, 11 October. The following Monday African workers were deliberately given the impression by management that those workers who did not wish to work overtime that afternoon would not be required to do so. As a result a majority of them chose not to do so. Management at Conac Engineering thereupon changed their strategy.

Upon arrival at work the following morning African workers

were kept waiting outside the factory. The manager instructed them to divide into two groups: those who would accept the overtime practices of the company and those who would not. Sixty four workers decided not to continue working overtime under the prevailing conditions. They were informed that they were dismissed and had to wait for their pay-off wages, a condition which the workers were unwilling to accept. MAWU organisers discussed the matter with the workers and it was decided that the three elected liaison committee representatives experiencing the lock-out should report the existence of a lock-out to the Labour Department. At the Labour Department office the representatives were intercepted by an official who chased them off the premises. It was only through the union's attorney that the workers could indirectly raise the dispute with the Labour Department. The response of the divisional Inspector of Labour, Mr Stocks, was to say that his inspectors were investigating the possibility of a strike and he accused the committee members of being agitators.

The locked out workers returned to the factory the following morning only to be accosted by Department of Labour officials who informed them that they were all fired and that they had to collect their wages. The workers then attempted to meet with the union's organisers, but were closely followed and filmed by the security police while management and Department of Labour officials looked on.

The union's attorney then turned to the Industrial Council for assistance. He inquired from its Inspector whether Conac Engineering had been granted exemption to allow overtime work of more than 10 hours per week. The Inspector responded that he was tied by the secrecy clause, a clause which prohibits the divulging of 'trade secrets', in the Industrial Conciliation Act

not to disclose this information.

With the pro-management stance adopted by the Labour Department, workers accepted the inevitability of not being re-employed only to be accosted by another state department that appeared to be in connivance with Conac Engineering's management. When the workers went to the Department of Bantu Administration to register as workseekers they were at first told by an official that they would be endorsed out of the area if they did not accept re-employment at Conac. Although a superior official overruled these threats, they were suggestive of behind the scenes contact between the Bantu Administration Department and Conac management which had been having difficulty with inexperienced workers brought to them by the Department. It seemed likely that the Bantu Administration Department was asked to direct the experienced workers back to Conac Engineering.

This strategy could have been in conflict with the policy of the Labour Department which did not want fired workers who were members of MAWU to be re-employed. At a later date Mr Stocks explained to the union's attorney that it was the policy of his department not to be of any assistance to those industrial workers who were members of unregistered trade unions.

The dispute MAWU had with Conac Engineering was notable for the fact that three state departments, Labour, Police and Bantu Administration, as well as the statutory Industrial Council were all opposed to MAWU. Their reactions ranged from uncooperativeness to outright hostility, opposition and interruption.

MAWU's first phase of development was characterised by rapid growth and relatively high worker militancy in the wake of the 1973 Durban strikes. It lasted for about two years, but then a period of decline and collapse set in.

### 3. New Strategy 1975 and Collapse of MAWU 1976

During 1975 MAWU's paid up membership started to decline gradually. In February 1975 it collected R587 in worker subscriptions in Durban and R480 in Pietermaritzburg, representing a total paid up membership of about 1340. (24) By August of the same year total union subscriptions had declined somewhat to between R800 and R1000 per month, reflecting a paid up membership of between 920 and 1150 members. The signed up membership was still rising from about 5000 in June to 6500 in August 1975. (25) The apparent discrepancy between declining paid up membership during 1975 on the one hand and rising signed up membership on the other was due to the fact that the union was signing up additional members by moving on to new factories, but members recruited earlier started lapsing while still being counted as signed on members by the union.

In 1975 worker militancy in Natal also started to recede. The decline in worker militancy as well as the experiences at Leyland made MAWU reassess and change its organisational method during 1975. The change was described as follows in June 1975:

Initially, the Union had been largely office-based, but as a result of the ruptures at Leyland, it was found necessary to become far more factory based in our structure and method of organisation. This, of course, implied intensive training of the shop stewards in order to improve their effective functioning. (26)

The reasons for switching union strategy were explained in a MAWU Report to the fourth TUACC Council meeting:

A number of factors have led to changes in organisational strategy being made. Previously organisation had been based on a mass drive for membership without a thorough assessment of the direction of the Union or the consequences of such a drive. The heightened militancy of Durban workers, following the strikes made the mass organisational drive appear successful, but the subsequent lessening of militancy on the workers' part and the need to train suitably qualified personnel to deal with the problems of the Union have necessitated a reassessment of

strategy. Broadly speaking, this reassessment has resulted in two major changes in strategy: (a) decentralisation, (b) concentration of resources upon a few carefully selected factories. (27)

By decentralisation MAWU meant the transfer of organisational responsibilities from organisers to shop stewards in the factories:

The union officials now concentrate primarily upon training of workers in shop steward committees, making it in turn the responsibility of these shop steward committees to recruit and organise members, and to collect subscriptions. Regular meetings of shop stewards from particular factories are held and training is integrated with the ongoing organisational process at these factories.

The Report however spelled out an ideal and was very far from what was actually happening in MAWU. It also mentioned the opening of an office in Jacobs as part of the decentralisation strategy, but this was not to take place until well into the following year because of disagreements between the MAWU and TUACC secretaries. (28)

MAWU was concentrating its organisational efforts on eight factories in Durban, including Non Ferrous Metal Works, Leyland and Defy, and four in Pietermaritzburg, including Scottisch Cables, Sarmcol and Huletts (formerly Alcan) Aluminium. It claimed to have functioning shop stewards committees at all twelve the companies, (29) but this claim was an exaggeration.

This was evident in the financial collapse of MAWU during 1976. At a BEC meeting of the union in August it was decided to approach TUACC for financial assistance because 'the Union was in a bad financial position'. (30) At the TUACC Secretariat the following month it was decided to allocate R1500 at its disposal equally to MAWU, NUTW and CWIU, because all three unions were experiencing financial problems at the time. (31)

It was probably a matter of bitter irony to MAWU to appeal to TUACC for financial assistance when the union had received a

grant of R15000 from the IMF a few months before in order to assist the Heinemann workers on the Witwatersrand after their calamitous strike in March 1976. The money was channelled to the MAWU secretary in Durban who was expected to advance it to the Heinemann workers via the Johannesburg branch. However a dispute arose between the union and TUACC over who should have control over the money, MAWU or TUACC. TUACC was formulating a position that all funds had to be received by itself and it would then allocate the monies and resources according to mutually agreed upon criteria to the unions. MAWU however felt its autonomy was threatened by this policy of TUACC. To understand why, over and above the dispute over control of the money donated by the IMF, MAWU adopted this attitude, it is necessary to examine the situation in more detail.

There were two structural reasons why MAWU had more latitude than the other TUACC unions to formulate and adopt its own position. Firstly, it built links very early in its history with the IMF, the most aggressive international trade secretariat operating within the country at that time. By serving on the Consultative Committee, the union's secretary, Alpheus Mthethwa, was exposed to outside politics and offers which gave him and the union a certain amount of independence and leverage. Secondly, owing to the organisational effort of the IAS Metal Wing, a MAWU branch was opened in Johannesburg in about September 1975 which was outside the control of TUACC. A Co-ordinating Committee encompassing the Natal and Transvaal branches was formed. This enabled MAWU to build up a relationship with Johannesburg organisations to the exclusion of TUACC. (32)

But there were also socio-cultural and personal factors that gave MAWU greater independence. This was due to the fact that

it had an African secretary right from its inception and that White intellectuals, after the bannings in January 1974, did not play an active or central role in the union. According to Cheadle, Mthethwa 'did not allow any form of White penetration whatsoever'. (33) Copelyn explained Mthethwa's modus operandi more extensively:

Alpheus was actually keen to keep all options open. He was the kind of guy who would go to everybody and get advice from them and then make his own way from there. I respect him for that in many ways because he was dealing with intellectuals, he wasn't an intellectual himself and he always found himself at a disadvantage in these debates. (34)

Mthethwa perceived the situation as one in which intellectuals could potentially dominate his union because

there was a gap between intellectuals and others. Intellectuals were helped by being more articulate. Their position gave them access into knowledge and other matters. (35)

He also thought there was a personal conflict between himself and the secretary of TUACC who 'interfered' in MAWU and unsuccessfully tried to get him expelled from the union. Alec Erwin did not think that the dispute between MAWU and TUACC was a personal one. The problem was that

personality things get thrown up more and more when there are issues of dispute that cannot easily be clarified or rationally argued about. I think the issues at stake were not personality issues, but personality issues to some extent exacerbated things that had been going wrong anyway. (36)

And it was clear that things were going wrong in MAWU. Its organisation had almost totally collapsed by the end of the year and it was collecting a mere R40 in monthly subscriptions. (37) There were a combination of factors that accounted for the collapse of MAWU. Essentially MAWU in Natal was not able to gain concrete victories for workers in the factories. This was due to the organising strategy of the secretary who had 'jumped into the factory by factory syndrome' (38) instead of

consolidating and stabilising organisation at a few factories.

What he was doing was drawing people here and they pay, but when they start falling off he moved to the next plant, and the next. And once he'd done this he started moving far out to Richard's Bay leaving all the factories here just to collapse and die. (39)

Another reason why MAWU was losing worker support was because it was not paying out death benefits to members with legitimate claims. Some pretext was found for not paying, but the real reason was the dire financial straits the union found itself in. Coupled with the lack of organisational support, workers started feeling that the union was letting them down. (40)

A point was reached where the union was therefore no longer able to sustain worker support. It could also not rely on the high worker militancy of 1973 and 1974 to draw in workers. MAWU thus entered a vicious cycle in which it could not gain workers' support because it was not making gains at the workplace and it was not advancing at the workplace because the workers' support was not forthcoming.

MAWU's problems were increased by the economic recession in 1976 that hit the metal and engineering industry quite hard. Retrenchments and short-time were prevalent in the industry during the year. (41) The union was thus further weakened by the economic slump. On top of that the state struck a blow against MAWU in November 1976 by banning Alpheus Mthethwa and Moses Ndlovu, a Pietermaritzburg organiser of the union. In the Transvaal branch two key figures, Anderson and Kubheka, were also banned. On the national level MAWU lay shattered at the end of 1976.

#### 4. The Reconstruction of MAWU 1977-1979

After Junerose Nala was released from detention in December 1976, the MAWU BEC requested the NUTW to release her because MAWU had no experienced organisers. She thereupon became secretary of MAWU and spent her first two years reviving and rebuilding the union in Natal. The strategy she adopted was to concentrate on a limited number of factories and to choose foreign subsidiaries rather than South African owned companies in order to use international leverage and the EEC Code of Conduct to try and force the companies' hand into recognising MAWU.

In Pietermaritzburg she started organising Scottish Cables and Sarmcol, but it was very time-consuming because of the great distance she had to travel. Consequently the MAWU BEC persuaded John Makatini, a Scottish Cable shop steward and BEC member, to become a union organiser in July 1977. He was subsequently joined by Geoff Schreiner early in 1979.

This released Nala to concentrate more on organisation in Durban. In the Jacobs area she started working on Defy, Non-Ferrous Metal Works and Ferodo. Defy was soon abandoned because the workers were still not interested in the union following the strike in May 1975.

In February 1978 Willies Mchunu was appointed as organiser in the Jacobs office. This allowed Nala to focus her energies on Pinetown where MAWU also opened an office. She started organising at Glacier Bearings and Natal Die Casting. As Glacier Bearings was a 60% owned subsidiary of the international Associated Engineering company based in Britain, Nala decided to concentrate on it. (43) Over the next two years MAWU conducted a most intensive organisational drive and recognition campaign at Glacier Bearings.

### The Glacier Bearing Campaign

After the strike by African workers at Glacier Bearings in January 1974, union organisation at the company whittled away. The company carried on operating with its statutory registered African liaison committee and in February 1974 introduced a non-statutory liaison committee for its Indian workers. For the next three years the company conducted its relations with its employees through racially segregated committees. (44) In June 1977, after opening an office in Pinetown, MAWU once more started organising African workers at the company which was employing about 190 Africans, 60 Indians and 50 Whites at that time. The Africans were almost exclusively employed in the lower grade jobs, Grades 4 to 6, as labourers and operatives. (45) The union made rapid headway and by January 1978 membership stood at 129 or 68% of the African workforce. (46)

The initial organising strategy adopted by MAWU was to gain control of the representative portion of the liaison committee. In February 1978 management announced that new elections for the African liaison committee were to be held and the union succeeded in having shop stewards elected to all the seats except one. Glacier Bearings management had by then become aware of the union's presence at the company and started intimidating suspected union members. The shop stewards feared that victimisation of union activists was imminent and recommended that the union should make a direct approach to management and so provide potential umbrella protection for the members. This was ratified by a general factory meeting and on 31 March 1978 a letter was sent by MAWU to the company demanding recognition of the union. (47)

Glacier Bearing's response to MAWU's demand for recognition

was the most sophisticated counter-offensive encountered by the union up to then. Three weeks later the managing director, Mr W J Richards, arranged an interview with the union secretary. He established the exact nature of the union's demands and promised that he would raise the matter with the Management Board. While the union awaited a reply the company restructured its industrial relations system in a deliberate anti-union strategy. The company formed a Combined Liaison Committee consisting of all the racially constituted liaison committees. It held its first meeting on 9 May where management announced a proposed new Combined Negotiating Committee with representation of White, Indian and African workers from all Grades as well as management serving on it. Grades 4 to 6, where almost all the African workers were located, would have a minority of 8 representatives out of a total of 20 on the Committee. (48)

A week or two afterwards management intimidated union members more forcefully, by letting two security police members onto the premises under false pretences to interrogate Enock Mabaso, chairman of the shop stewards committee and of the union's BEC. (49)

Only after that, on 26 May, did management reply to the union by refusing its demand for recognition. They indicated that they favoured their own new industrial relations system and forged ahead over the next two months with its establishment. The managing director personally went around from department to department explaining the new system to workers. On 21 June nominations and elections were held for employees in Grade 1 which were mostly White employees, and for workers in Grades 2 and 3 which mainly consisted of Indian workers. A personnel clerk approached African workers to nominate representatives for Grades 4 to 6, but they refused to co-operate. (50) A notice

was circulated stating that in future there would be no further meetings of the racially separate liaison committees, but only the combined liaison committee would meet.

Faced with such determined managerial opposition and hostility, the MAWU National Executive Committee decided on 17 June 1978 to turn the drive for recognition at Glacier Bearing into a public campaign concentrating on international publicity. (51) From then on the union drew up detailed reports of the struggle at Glacier Bearings which were sent to the branch secretaries of the major union representing workers in plants of Associated Engineering, the parent company in Britain. The union's strategy in doing so was to try and prevent management from escalating the conflict to a level where the state was given the opportunity to intervene in the dispute. The union believed that a publicity campaign could create the necessary countervailing pressures on Glacier Bearings. (52)

Management revealed a further advance of their anti-union strategy more clearly with an address to a general assembly of all employees delivered by the managing director on 12 July 1978. He stated that

It was agreed by the majority of employees that the 'Liaison Committee system should be replaced by the Industrial Relations Committee which is non-racial and operates on a job grading basis. (53)

He also emphasized that all industrial relations matters would in future have to be channelled through the Industrial Relations Committee which was subsequently referred to as the Industrial Relations Council. The Council was very similar in structure to the earlier Combined Negotiating Committee. In fact, the members of the disbanded Combined Negotiating Committee simply transferred their membership to the new Industrial Relations Council. (54)

Another aspect of management's strategy against MAWU became clear on 7 September 1978 in a letter to the secretary in which the criteria for recognising MAWU were spelled out. The criteria included consulting the Industrial Relations Council on the union's application for recognition, as well as the signing of an agreement with the Council. The union would also be expected to abide by the constitution of the Council. (55) It was thus clear that the union would, if recognised, be expected to work within the framework of the Industrial Relations Council. The union found these conditions unacceptable. (56) There were other, more regular, requirements that the union found acceptable. Those were adequate proof that the union was representative of a 'substantial majority' of workers, submission of the union constitution and assurances that the union would 'conduct its affairs as though it was a registered trade union.' (57)

The union responded to Glacier Bearing's counter-offensive with a multiple-strategy. It contended with the Industrial Relations Council that was initiating its own moves against the union; MAWU also seized the opportunity to negotiate conditions for recognition with management; when deadlock was reached it took up the international campaign more forcefully in 1979. The union also concentrated on maintaining sound organisation of the general members while increasing the representative role of the shop stewards as much as possible. This was mainly achieved through organisational efforts, but the union also embarked on a legal strategy to get the inoperative African liaison committee declared defunct by a court of law and to elect a works committee in its place. These strategies are each considered in more detail below.

At an Industrial Relations Council meeting on 11 October 1978 the representatives decided that, should the union be recognised, it would be expected to participate in the Council system. (58) They were also concerned about the regular non-attendance of the Council by the elected African liaison committee representatives. A fortnight later a sub-committee of the Industrial Relations Council attended a meeting at MAWU at which they tried to persuade the union shop stewards to participate in the Council system. It was agreed to let the workers whom they represented decide at a general union meeting which was held at Glacier Bearings two days later. In the words of the Industrial Relations Council representatives that attended,

although a count was not taken for and against it was indicated by the people that the Union men represented were of a unanimous opinion that their Union shop stewards must never attend the Industrial Relations Council meetings. (59)

Not satisfied with the outcome of the union meeting, the Industrial Relations Council, in co-operation with management, arranged to hold a ballot of all the Glacier Bearing employees during work time on 2 November 1978. The aim of the ballot was to test whether the Industrial Relations Council was accepted by the majority of workers as 'the correct and only platform for discussions and negotiations with Management.' (60)

The union contended that the referendum was conducted in a highly irregular manner. The union was given no advance notice of the intended referendum and could therefore not prepare beforehand to put their case to the workers. There was no check list of employees to see who had voted and to ensure no double voting. According to the union, most African workers refused to participate in the ballot, but there was managerial pressure put on them to vote. MAWU contended that at most 20 African workers

participated in the procedures. (61) The results announced by the Industrial Relations Council presented a completely different picture: 194 African employees were in favour of the Council, 17 against and 44 were 'absent'. (62) These results suggested that a majority of African employees voted in favour of the Council, but the voting procedure adopted cast doubt on reaching a firm conclusion. The ballot clearly provided management with more armour in their battle against MAWU.

Protracted negotiations between MAWU and Glacier Bearings followed after management announced their union recognition conditions. From the start the union pressed for the attendance of shop stewards at the discussions with management. However management agreed to meet only union officials on 19 October. The officials indicated that they saw the Industrial Relations Council as having been established to avoid recognising MAWU. They managed to press management into conceding that the final responsibility for recognising the union lay with management and not the Industrial Relations Council. (63)

The following meeting scheduled with management for 14 November 1978 was called off by the shop stewards because they could not be present. (64) After much pressure a union delegation with four shop stewards present met with management a week later. At this meeting the battle lines between the positions of the opposing sides were clearly drawn. The union presented its position on recognition which included the right of the shop stewards committee to represent workers in the plant, dismissal and grievance procedures, and regular wage negotiations. The company reiterated its position as submitted on 7 September and stressed that the union would have to work through the Industrial Relations Council.

On the question of the union's representativeness, it claimed to have 160 members which made it representative of the Grades 4 to 6 employees. The company wished to have the names of the members, but the union was only willing to do so if the company first agreed to grant check-off rights to the union. (65) These positions were to be taken up time and again at subsequent meetings with neither side willing to concede any significant ground.

Management also devised delaying tactics that slowed down progress towards recognition. A meeting of 16 January 1979 was taken up with a consideration of the provisions in the Industrial Conciliation Act for the registration of a union. (66) Scheduled, more frequent, meetings with the company's personnel manager were called off by the union because he had no instructions from the Board of Directors on a number of issues crucial to the union. (67)

Through sustained and tough negotiation the union made slow progress on a few issues in its struggle for recognition. An appropriate question to ask at a ballot in order to check union representivity at the plant was discussed at a meeting of 25 April. (68) But a deadlock was reached during 1979, with management insisting that the union first indicate how they would fit into the Industrial Relations Council before they would be recognised. (69)

To try and break through the deadlock MAWU decided to put greater international pressure on the company. (70) The opportunity presented itself with the response of Scottish shop stewards to the detailed reports MAWU had been sending to the branch secretaries of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW), the major union representing workers at Associated Engineering, the parent company of Glacier Bearings.

The shop stewards from Glacier Bearing plants in Glasgow and Kilmarnock started questioning local management about the recognition of MAWU in the Pinetown plant. During the first half of 1979 it became apparent that there were discrepancies between the claims of management and the information supplied by MAWU. In order to give them first hand knowledge of the situation MAWU decided to ask the Scottish shop stewards to send representatives to Pinetown. They decided to send Dick Christianson from the Glasgow plant.

A problem however arose when SACTU intervened and tried to prevent the visit to South Africa. A SACTU representative went to Glasgow and tried to dissuade Christianson from going on the grounds that there should be a total boycott of South Africa. (71) The SACTU representative also attended a Glasgow district AUEW meeting at which he claimed that the visit was a management plot designed to whitewash the company and that the visit would harm African workers at Glacier Bearing in Cape Town. The district committee thereupon decided not to support the proposed visit.

The Scottish shop stewards decided to go ahead with the planned visit and Christianson came out to South Africa in October 1979. He was however not able to gain entry to the Pinetown plant, but attended a general meeting of Glacier Bearing union members where he told his fellow workers that he would report back to his union members in Glasgow and that they would try to force their management to put pressure on the local Pinetown management to recognise MAWU. He also promised that they would also speak to other unions to do the same to Associated Engineering (UK). (72)

Christianson's visit did however not achieve the

breakthrough the union was hoping for. Although he did win resolutions of support for the Pinetown workers from the combined shop stewards committees at Glasgow and Kilmarnock, the crucial AUEW district committee still refused to support MAWU because the visit was a breach of the boycott position promoted by SACTU. Without the support of the district committee it was difficult to take the issue to higher levels in the AUEW in order to develop a strong attack on Associated Engineering's policy in South Africa.

Yet another part of MAWU's strategy was to advance the representation of the shop stewards at the work place. It was somewhat more successful on this level. In the first place the union sustained a high level of involvement of the rank and file members in the recognition. General factory meetings at the union offices or departmental meetings organised by the shop stewards were held relatively frequently, sometimes fortnightly. The workers usually reconfirmed their support of the union's recognition stand and their opposition to the company's industrial relations system. (73) Secondly the union managed to persuade management that the workers had the right to choose whoever they wanted to represent them in the plant. (74) Although top management agreed to this (75) shop stewards had problems being accepted by supervisors and production managers. (76)

In order to try and secure a stronger foothold on the shopfloor MAWU also adopted a legal strategy. It sought to eliminate the liaison committee as a statutory body behind which management could hide in order to justify refusing the union recognition. MAWU's strategy was first to take over the liaison committee and, once that was done, to boycott it. (77) Since management still persisted in maintaining the facade that the liaison committee functioned as envisaged in the law, MAWU

decided to take legal action to have the statutory African liaison committee abolished.

The case was taken up with the participation of employees who had to sign affidavits and give evidence of court. (78) Such acts required considerable commitment and courage on the part of the Glacier Bearing workers because they feared that they might be victimised by the company. On 20 October 1978 the shop steward representatives on the liaison committee notified Glacier Bearings management that they intended taking legal action to have the liaison committee declared defunct. (79) In spite of the fact that management had repeatedly told workers that they had replaced the liaison committee with the new industrial relations system, the managing director opposed the action stating that,

as in my view the Liaison Committee has not ceased to function, I deny that I am obliged to notify the Inspector that it is defunct. (80)

The union lost its first legal attempt to have the liaison committee removed when the judge ruled that the shop stewards had no locus standi to bring the application.

Undeterred by this pronouncement, the union proceeded with a second attempt to abolish the liaison committee in August 1979, but on this occasion the shop stewards also wanted an order that a works committee be elected. (81) On 14 March a petition requesting the establishment of a works committee and signed by 133 of the African employees constituting 70% of the African work force was handed to management. (82) Before that the shop steward representatives had repeatedly advised management that they no longer regarded the liaison committee to be in existence any more. Eventually they informed management in writing on 28 March that they did not accept that management had

the right to stifle all negotiation and to cling to the shell of a Committee which has long since stopped functioning, if it ever did, as a basis to refuse a Works Committee. (83)

On this occasion the union was victorious. The judge ruled in March 1980 that the liaison committee had to be declared defunct and that management had to proceed with the election of a works committee. (84) The outcome of this case, which was the first legal strategy taken up in Natal by FOSATU and was integrated with other aspects of the campaign, was considered to be highly successful. (85) MAWU succeeded in gaining a more secure organisational foothold for itself in the plant by getting rid of the liaison committee and replacing it with a works committee which was wholly elected by the workers and could thus be completely under the control of the union.

In spite of the legal victory MAWU had not made much headway at Glacier Bearings at the end of 1979 after two and a half years of intensive struggle. The union's recognition drive was bogged down in discussions over recognition, not negotiation of the recognition agreement. It was only on the shop floor that shop stewards were granted recognition as the workers' representatives, but not as part of the union. MAWU however persevered in its efforts and was rewarded with success in 1981 when it finally won recognition from the company.

While the Glacier Bearing campaign was the most prominent one conducted by MAWU, the union was gradually building itself up at a number of plants in Pietermaritzburg as well. These will be considered next.

#### MAWU Organisation in Pietermaritzburg

MAWU's organisation in Pietermaritzburg started to expand under the competent guidance of Makatini and Schreiner. They

and another organiser, Harry Gwala, concentrated their efforts on four companies, Scottish Cables, Huletts Aluminium, Sarmcol and Multi-Metals. The stage of development up to November 1979 is examined below.

Scottish Cables was one of the first companies to be organised by MAWU in 1973. At that time 54% of its issued share capital was held by BICC (UK) in Britain. (86) By January 1974 the union deemed itself to have sufficient support to approach the company to take up complaints of forced overtime and the downgrading of workers due to the introduction of new technology. The company responded in May 1974 that it would carry on working through its liaison committee that had been established the previous year. However, shortly thereafter union organisation in Pietermaritzburg received a setback when the chairman became involved in 'national politics' and the secretary resigned. Organisation at Scottish Cables then regressed although it never actually came to a complete halt. (87)

With the reconstruction of MAWU organisation at Scottish Cables was revived. In the beginning of 1979 signed up African membership stood at 240 of which about 140 were paid up. The total labour force at the company was roughly 700 of which an estimated 450 were African production workers and 85 Coloureds mostly in supervisory position. The main grievance of African workers at the time was the fact that they were working a shortened 4-day week, but that this was coupled with regular overtime work that affected most of the production workers. (88)

The union decided to use the existing combined liaison committee representing African and Coloured workers as a means of advancing its base inside the factory. As a result 5 of the 7 African worker representatives voted onto the liaison committee in February were union members. In May 1979 the union

representatives on the liaison committee raised the question of union recognition by management, but the union decided that it would not be tactically wise to approach management directly for recognition yet because organisation in some departments of the plant were still weak. (89)

By August 1979 the organisers and shop stewards committee decided that the union should commence its recognition campaign in spite of the fact that it did not manage to mobilise solid worker support on the issue. Only about 30 workers turned up at a meeting in the beginning of the month to draw up a worker mandate to approach Scottish Cable's management. The union attributed this lack of worker enthusiasm to the fact that it had been organising at the company for a very long time without producing substantial gains. As a result the workers had become sceptical of any new move on the part of the union. (90)

The opening move was made with a letter from the union secretary requesting a meeting between Scottish Cables management and the union officials and shop stewards in order to discuss union recognition. A supportive letter signed by 6 of the 7 African liaison committee representatives accompanied the request. The Coloured representatives on the committee had been approached to sign the letter, but they were too afraid to do so. A petition requesting union recognition and signed by at least 290 of the African workers was to be submitted later to management as well. (91)

Management agreed to meet the union delegation on 26 August and the issue that dominated the meeting was how the union would prove its representativity at the plant. The union proposed a secret ballot in the factory which management rejected 'on grounds that were not entirely clear.' In its place management

insisted on scrutinising the Scottish Cables membership list of the union. The union was reluctant to reveal the names of its members to management for fear of victimisation and sought to build safeguards for its members into such a procedure. (92) Negotiations then proceeded on how union membership at the company would be verified with the shop stewards and official of the union being out-manoeuvred by the company. At a meeting on 25 October the union representatives agreed that a company accountant would be used to verify the union's membership list. (93)

An even larger problem faced the union though. At a Pietermaritzburg joint staff meeting on 7 November 1979 it was pointed out to the inexperienced organiser who was organising only Scottish Cables that the union probably did not have a majority of African workers unionised at the plant. In July 1979 the paid up membership was only 110 or 25% of the African workers. The staff decided that the union urgently needed another 50 signed up members 'to be safe' and planned to hold a Scottish Cables party in order to recruit more members. (94) At a poorly attended shop stewards meeting later that day the shop stewards endorsed the proposal. (95) By making a somewhat premature advance to gain recognition at Scottish Cables MAWU was thus finding itself in a precarious negotiating situation with its management by November 1979.

Hulett's (formerly Alcan) Aluminium was, along with Scottish Cables, one of the first factories MAWU organised in Pietermaritzburg. It was also a subsidiary of an international company with Alcan in Canada holding 70% of the shares. The union made very good progress in 1974 at the company and was able 'to gain access to management.' The relationship developed to a point where the union was 'negotiating for total recognition',

(96) but for unknown reasons the agreement was not signed and union organisation at Hulett's crumbled.

The situation at Hulett's Aluminium facing MAWU after its revival was the existence of a very sophisticated liaison committee system. The company was large with an African and Indian labour force of about 960 of which 725 were Africans. Union recruitment increased considerably from 90 members at the beginning of 1979 to 200 by November, but it remained a small proportion of the labour force. By November 1979 the union did not yet have shop stewards, but only a very loose steering committee. It was looking for issues around which to mobilise workers to join the union, but was having problems because workers had become disillusioned with the union after its failure in 1974. (97)

Sarmcol, a rubber manufacturing company in Howick, was another factory that MAWU started organising very early in its history. In 1974 the union approached management for recognition. Although the request was 'favourably received' (98) the company set up a liaison committee instead and subsequently intimidated union members inside the factory. (99) Five years later, in September 1979 the company employed about 1800 workers of which 1400 were Africans, but membership was still quite small: the union had signed up about 280, or one-fifth, of the African workers; of these only 120 were paid up. (100)

There were a number of reasons why union membership at Sarmcol remained relatively small. The major problem facing the union was the apparent close co-operation between the company and the police. Every time the union organiser distributed pamphlets outside the union gates, the police turned up. (101) Then, on 12 June 1979, Makatini was actually taken to the police

station for questioning and warned that he would be arrested under the Riotous Assemblies Act if he met with more than 10 people. (102) The effect of such police intimidation was that workers gained the impression that MAWU was an illegal organisation and became reluctant to join it. (103)

Therefore although the union had been organising at Sarmcol for a long period the workers had not perceived any material improvement in the very bad working conditions they faced. In one department workers had breathing problems because they did not have masks. Workers were also easily dismissed for the smallest reasons. (104) Further disillusionment with the union thus set in. (105) On account of these problems the union did not have many good contacts inside the factory. The Steering Committee had very few strong members serving on it while only about 5 of the 25 liaison committee members supported the union.

To try and overcome these problems MAWU decided to approach management directly in June 1979 in order to try and gain access to the plant on a regular weekly basis and to obtain an undertaking from management that workers at Sarmcol would not be prejudiced in any way if they were to join MAWU. (106) The union deliberately decided to approach management with limited membership because it feared that members would lose interest in they had to wait for a long time before anything happened. On the other hand it hoped that the workers would start joining the union as a result of contact between the union and management. (107)

The response of Sarmcol's managing director, Mr A R Hesp, was both uninformed and discouraging. While there was no law that prevented the company from recognising the union, he replied that they were 'unable to enter into discussion' with MAWU as it was unregistered. (108) The union responded with two

strategies. The one was to try and gain workers' signatures to a petition stating that they rejected the liaison committee. However, by 9 November 1979 it appeared as if the petition would not gain sufficient worker support to submit it to management.

(109) The other strategy was to write to the parent company of Sarmcol, British Tyre and Rubber in London, in order to try and pressurise the company to conform to the EEC Code of Conduct.

(110) The union had however not received a reply by November 1979.

In August 1979 MAWU obtained an issue on which it could mobilise workers when management unilaterally announced an across the board wage increase of R2,30 which was supposed to cover the rise in the cost of living. The increase however covered less than half of the annual increase of 15% in the cost of living on average wage of R32 per week. The union however failed to mobilise workers at Sarmcol effectively over the issue. (111) According to Schreiner the responsibility for this failure lay primarily at the door of the organisers for running the campaign ineffectively. (112) The union was therefore not succeeding in making much headway at Sarmcol.

At Multi-Metals & Machinery the union was also experiencing difficulty due to intransigent management. Multi-Metals was a small, locally owned scrap merchant company with a total labour force of about 120 African workers. Working conditions at the firm were extremely poor with a high labour turnover, jobs were very unskilled and wages were as low as R11,20 per week. (113)

Given such conditions, union organisation at the company progressed very rapidly. Within two months of commencing in May 1979 virtually every worker had joined the union. Workers at the factory then decided that

despite the fact that they were very strong it would be necessary to consolidate certain basic and fundamental rights in this factory before this type of management could be approached for recognition. So workers decided to establish a works committee inside the factory as the first step towards recognition. (114)

A registered works committee was duly formed. It did, however, not take long before management and the works committee parted ways. It happened at the first meeting of the works committee with management. The committee wanted management to accept an Agreement that entrenched certain rights for the committee, but management rather casually rejected it at the meeting. Management also decided that, in future, it would meet with only four works committee members even though the workers had insisted at its formation that they wished to have eight members on it. (115) At the following works committee meeting with management six committee members turned up. When management instructed two of them to leave they all left. (116)

This signalled the start of open conflict between management on the one hand and the workers and the union on the other. In quick succession management dismissed 6 workers including a union shop steward and an induna who actively supported the union. These actions were interpreted as victimisation by the workers as well as the union organisers who arranged a meeting with management to try and have the workers reinstated. Due to a lack of experience and diplomacy on the part of the organisers the meeting ended up in a heated argument with management rejecting any suggestion of reinstatement. A lawyer was then asked to go and see management, but it turned out to be a big mistake because he was not close to the union movement and did not adequately represent the workers' interests. (117) Workers considered going on strike, but the organisers advised them against it because of their vulnerability as unskilled workers.

(118)

Subsequently eight more workers were dismissed, but it was again beyond the powers of the works committee and the union to have them reinstated. The union changed its strategy and decided to take up what it deemed to be malpractices on the part of the company. The union, through its lawyer, demanded back-pay of workers who had been underpaid. (119) It also decided to take up health and safety issues in the factory where the company appeared to be breaking many of the statutory requirements of the Factories Act. (120)

These were the unresolved issues at Multi-Metals by November 1979 where the union was strongly organised, but the workers were in a delicate situation that prevented the union from taking drastic action to improve the workers' material conditions.

Organisational achievements by MAWU's Pietermaritzburg organisers were at different levels by November 1979. It ranged from negotiating the conditions required to gain recognition at Scottish Cables, to intransigent management that refused any dealings with the union at Sarmcol. Although the union had not advanced very far in Pietermaritzburg, it was clear that its organisation had revived in the region and that it was on the ascent.

##### 5. Conclusion: MAWU up to November 1979

By November 1979 MAWU was well under way with its reconstruction since its collapse at the end of 1976. It was the second largest union with mostly African members in the Natal region of FOSATU. Paid up membership of the union was slightly over 800 while signed up membership was about two to three times that number. Although the union was open to all workers, it was still overwhelmingly African with only seven Coloured and a few

Indian members.

Financially the union was also making good progress. From the R40 collected monthly at the end of 1976, union subscriptions increased to slightly more than R1000 per month in October and November 1979. The monthly subsidy from FOSATU was in the vicinity of R1200. (121) Collection of subscriptions was done by shop stewards and the union placed great emphasis on workers paying for their own organisation. (122)

The BEC of MAWU had been stabilised and consisted of elected representatives from each of the organised factories. Each factory elected two shop stewards and two alternatives onto the BEC. MAWU was also advancing in its factory organisation in spite of the fact that it was coming up against strong managerial opposition. The organisational activities and revival in the Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg regions, which have been considered above, were considerably more advanced than those in the Jacobs region. The factory where the organisers operating from the Jacobs office had achieved most was Non-Ferrous Metal Extractors.

At Non-Ferrous Metal Extractors the union had about 80 members and a shop stewards committee of nine members in October 1979. Worker solidarity was strong at the end of 1978 when workers in the factory downed tools over the dismissal of six union members on shut-down day. The factory was however backsliding as the union had been losing members. The reasons for this were that the organiser was paying inadequate attention to membership, a lack of worker leadership in the plant, and disillusionment with the union for losing contact with management. (123)

In the opinion of MAWU's regional secretary, a factory was well organised when it had around 50% membership and a strong

shop stewards group. By these criteria he considered only 2 factories to be well organised. These were Glacier Bearings and Multi-Metals. Scottish Cables almost qualified as well. Thus out of the 15 factories MAWU was organising in Natal at the end of 1979, two to three were well organised. Although this was a small number, there was no doubt that MAWU had successfully been revived.

Other issues that faced MAWU during the period of reconstruction were the formation of a national union, membership of the IMF Consultative Committee, and the registration issue. In August 1977 MAWU became a national union when the Natal and Transvaal branches amalgamated. Junerose Nala was elected general secretary of the national union. The amalgamation took place without any problems since the branches had kept in close touch and adopted the same organisational strategies. The two branches had both collapsed during 1976 and were more or less at the same level of reconstruction when they amalgamated. (124)

From the time she started as secretary of MAWU in 1977 Nala became involved in the IMF. She had to struggle against some of the members of the IMF Consultative Committee who were opposed to MAWU's participation in the Committee. MAWU however found that it had a great deal in common with the UAW and NUMARWOSA on the Consultative Committee and these three unions started caucusing together before meetings of the Committee. This considerably strengthened MAWU's role on the Consultative Committee and Nala succeeded in becoming the chairperson in 1978. The conservative White unions on the IMF gave MAWU a considerable amount of trouble. As a result Nala felt that MAWU needed to retain some control over the Consultative Committee in order to prevent these unions dominating the international support from the IMF in Geneva. (125)

Although MAWU was not the largest union in the Natal region of FOSATU, it was the most innovative union. Noteworthy innovations included the drafting of reports on the organisation of factories by organisers and the submission of BEC resolutions to the FOSATU Regional Executive Committee meetings. The union's innovativeness brought some criticisms from other quarters within FOSATU that MAWU was going its own way, an accusation that Nala denied strongly. She maintained that it was her primary responsibility to revive MAWU first. In particular she had to spend much time in building up the other organisers who were all new.

The inexperience of most of the MAWU organisers was still a major weakness of the union by the end of 1979. They lacked the ability to initiate activities that would advance workers' struggles in the factories which they were organising. They also lacked the knowledge to plan programmes and the confidence to carry them through by themselves. Nala felt it was a mistake to pull good people into the union and then not to offer them the training they required to become effective organisers. The way to train a new organiser, Nala said, was

to work very closely with him. To plan things with him even though he works by himself, to test the plan, but to keep a tap on him so that I know that he's doing something, that he's really got his ideas worked out and that he knows how to implement them. (126)

Although Nala was able to undertake some training of new organisers, the demands on her did not afford her much time to build up the organisers. In Pietermaritzburg Geoff Schreiner was also playing a training role to some extent although he was still relatively inexperienced himself.

By the end of 1979 MAWU's structure and organisation had thus been revived. Although it was only well organised at two

factories, it had built sound practices with shop steward participation in the union.

## Chapter 5

### The Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU)

#### 1. Formation of the CWIU

The CWIU was the first union that grew directly out of the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund (GFWBF). The officials of the GFWBF succeeded in solving the complaints of individual workers at African Explosives & Chemical Industries (AE&CI), the largest chemical plant in the Durban region with a labour force of about 1500. This led to a substantial number of workers joining the Benefit Fund. Some of the complaints of the workers focussed around the pension/gratuity scheme affecting workers collectively. This provided an issue on which workers could be organised. It was explained to workers that there was no union which they fitted into, but if they organised a majority of members at their plant a union could be established. Thus during late 1973 and early 1974 workers at AE&CI organised themselves.

In response to these developments TUACC appointed Omar Badsha in June 1974 to organise workers in the chemical industry into a union. He was soon assisted by another organiser who was a former worker at Chrome Chemicals. Over the following five months the foundations were laid for the CWIU. In order to launch the union they focused their attention on specific factories chosen on the basis of three criteria: the extent of self-organisation on the part of the workers, the size of the plant, and where management were expected to take a progressive attitude towards the union.

Worker militancy was still high and hence the organisers initially adopted a policy of mass membership enrolment at the

plants they were organising. By August the situation at the three most advanced factories was that 626 workers had been recruited at AE&CI, 111 at Chrome Chemicals and 80 at Natal Contact Packers. Membership was increasing steadily and four months later membership at these factories stood at 758, 128 and 106 respectively. (1) Quality Products and other factories in the chemical industry were also either being organised or organising themselves and on 24 November 1974 the inaugural meeting of the CWIU was held where a Steering Committee of ten members was elected. (2)

## 2. Early Militancy and Decline of CWIU 1974-75

In the wake of the high worker militancy membership carried on increasing rapidly so that by June 1975 the union had a signed up membership of 2300 of which 900 were paid up. (3) They also had high expectations of gaining quick recognitions from management who were perceived to be on the defensive in the face of the upsurge in worker action. A considerable number of undertakings in the chemical industry had experienced strikes in 1973 and the worker militancy had carried over into 1974 to the extent that confrontations took place at four chemical companies. The situation was aptly described by John Mawbey:

In a climate of widespread worker militancy and support for the unions and with management momentarily on the defensive following the 1973 strikes, it did however appear possible that some managements might be persuaded to accept union participation in establishing a new industrial relations structure in their particular factories. (4)

The secretary was thus understandably over-optimistic and hoped to gain recognition from no less than four companies including AE&CI early in 1975. (5) Because of these expectations the union also took a principled decision against liaison and works committees and decided to boycott them where

possible.

The union's initial struggles took place at three factories: the AE&CI plant in Umbogintwini, Chrome Chemicals in Mobeni and Quality Products in Jacobs.

AE&CI had established Workers' Councils for its African employees as early as 1946. In 1973 the Councils were restructured as a system of liaison committees with a committee in each department. The primary intention of the liaison committees was for downward communication by management. This facilitated the growth of union membership at the company which stood at 625 in July 1974. In order to attract greater worker support, the union officials succeeded in arranging a meeting with the factory personnel officer over the dismissal of a long service worker. Shop floor participation was excluded from the initiative as no worker representatives from the factory accompanied the union officials. Discussions took place on management's attitude toward the union and the secretary, Badsha, was assured that higher management would be consulted on the topic. The secretary had high expectations from the meeting, but these were dashed when he was informed on 12 August by the personnel manager that he had been instructed not to talk to the union in future.

Following this setback the union organised a meeting at Bolton Hall which was attended by 200 AE&CI workers. They resolved that the secretary should write to Harry Oppenheimer on union recognition. The union also concentrated on recruiting more members and signed on 100 new members in a month. By November 1974 the union reached the 50% mark which it saw as putting a strong obligation on management to recognise it.

The letter to Oppenheimer achieved a break-through for the

union and it was able to resume contact with management. There were subsequently meetings between the union secretary, top management and the personnel manager in September, October and January 1975. The outcome of these discussions were that a grievance procedure was established between the company and the union at a bureaucratic level. The secretary obtained the right to discuss individual worker grievances with top personnel management. The discussions and arrangement succeeded in isolating the union officials from rank and file members. They also removed worker participation by superseding the existing procedure in which workers dealt directly with African personnel clerks over their complaints.

This arrangement on the part of the secretary laid the foundations for the union's demise at AE&CI. One of the chief areas of grievance among African workers was the operation of the company's gratuity scheme for long service workers. Although the union secured the payments of the gratuity, they were not on the basis which the workers desired. But the union was not able to make any headway on issues that affected the workers collectively. It even had to rely on the liaison committee to try and obtain information on managerial decisions affecting workers collectively. The workers did thus not see any concrete advantages emanating from the meetings between management and the union officials.

Disillusionment with union officials and Executive members on the part of the rank and file at AE&CI set in. The unity and enthusiasm of the workers were lost during 1975 and union organisation at the factory collapsed. Structural factors accelerated the demise of organisation at the plant: the sheer size of the company and its great distance from the union office made it more advantageous for the union to concentrate its

organisational efforts on other plants. The union therefore withdrew from AE&CI. But basically the major reason for the CWIU's failure to sustain its organisation at AE&CI was the failure of the officials to involve workers and their direct representatives in dealings and negotiations with management.

In the same industrial area as AE&CI stood South African Titan Products (SATP), closely related to AE&CI by ownership. Although the CWIU was not known to organise there, it is of interest to note the policy developed by SATP towards the union if they were to be approached by it. A policy statement by SATP management drafted on 26 June 1974 stated:

It is our policy that while African Trade Unions are not legally permitted to negotiate on behalf of African employees, we will abide by the law...

Should discussions arise on the subject we should aim to convince employees that:-

- 1) Negotiations will only be conducted through the liaison committee, i.e. with company employees.
- 2) Should employees wish to have union support they should try to get an employee onto the local union committee. He could then be elected onto the liaison committee if the employees so wished...
- 3) The liaison committee is the best form of direct communication as employees and management meet face to face.
- 4) Recruitment for unions will not be allowed on company premises.

The stance of SATP management clearly indicated their intention to promote the liaison committee as the primary form of industrial relations and that some form of union operation could be grafted onto it. It also demonstrated how management intended to use the legislation enacted in 1973 to avoid recognition of an independent worker organisation. But management was intent on undermining independent trade unions:

If one of these outside unregistered unions should approach us...and purport to act on behalf of our employees, we should ignore them completely as we did in 1962, in order to discredit them.

This policy statement on the part of SATP management spelled

out the strategy adopted in practice by very many companies towards the TUACC unions in Natal. The CWIU faced a similar counter-strategy from the management of Chrome Chemicals.

Chrome Chemicals was a relatively small plant with 200 workers. It was a subsidiary of overseas companies being jointly owned by a British company and the German based Bayer AG. Working conditions at the factory were extremely dangerous due to the chrome dust that could eat away the membrane at the back of workers' noses. This gave rise to considerable worker militancy. (6)

The union was able to recruit majority membership at the plant at an early stage and elected a fully representative shop stewards committee in September 1974. It was decided to embark on a recognition campaign and in October a meeting was held between the union officials and top management. The secretary proposed that negotiations should be conducted with the shop stewards committee as the true representatives of the workers, but management responded that the liaison committee was the appropriate body and that the union should rather contest elections for the liaison committee. The union however refused to do this and boycotted the elections successfully.

Management nonetheless continued to promote the liaison committee, and thus the CWIU attempted two new counter-strategies. It sought overseas support for its recognition drive and sent off letters to overseas bodies. These bodies were however not known to the union nor did it have the organisational network to follow up the letters overseas. The international campaign therefore did not produce any results. The union then resorted to exposure of the unsafe working conditions to the press, but management succeeded in turning the safety issue against the union. The company started to

introduce safer and more modern technology, but announced to workers at the end of 1975 that the effect thereof would be to reduce the labour force by no less than 50%. This threat, together with the fact that management became less open to official union contact, demoralised the union and the workers excessively. Support for the union waned and the shop stewards committee failed to meet again after the end of 1975 even though management did not carry out their threat to introduce large scale retrenchments. Such a response on the part of the union was rather indicative of a more general decline in the union's organisational ability.

The third company which the CWIU concentrated on initially was a wholly owned by the Danish East Asiatic Company. It had two subsidiaries, Quality Products and Natal Oil and Soap Industries (also known as National Oil Products, NOP). Because of attention focussed on these two plants by Danish Television, trade unions and other organisations, the union began a concerted organising drive at the plants in November 1974. The following month, while still very unrepresentative of the workers, contact was opened with management. They indicated that they were committed to liaison committees at that stage, but that they would consider recognition of the union if and when it obtained 50% membership of the work force regardless of race at both Quality Products and NOP.

When contact was established with management, the CWIU only had 68 members out of a potential 250 at Quality Products while at NOP the union had a mere 21 members of about 340 workers. The union however failed to seize the potential opportunity for recognition and never came within even close reach of the 50% membership mark for both plants. However, at Quality Products

membership had increased to 130, over the 50% mark, by July 1975, but at NOP it stood at a mere 33 members. It turned out that the union was over-confident of success because of management's sensitivity to overseas criticisms. The officials were under the misapprehension that they would gain a quick victory instead of having to rely on pressure from workers.

The union secretary held further discussions with the management of Quality Products in July 1975 over an impending liaison committee election. He tried to persuade management to elect a works committee instead of a liaison committee and left under the impression that management had agreed with him. However, when the election was announced it was clear that it would be for a liaison committee.

In response to the pending liaison committee election, a meeting of union members decided on a partial boycott. They decided to contest the elections where shop stewards stood a chance of winning, but boycotting it in other departments. But the strategy was ill-conceived because only two shop stewards were elected onto the liaison committee and, more seriously, the strategy caused a polarisation between union members and the rest of the workers. It also created an anti-union faction centred around the non-union members on the liaison committee. This episode proved to be a watershed in union growth at Quality Products. Membership started to decline and continued to do so up to the end of 1975. Organisation at Quality Products and NOP therefore dwindled away.

Although the CWIU was involved in similar campaigns at four other plants during 1975, the union was almost in a state of collapse by the end of the year. The BEC members from Chrome Chemicals and Quality Products were still meeting, but they had very little worker support behind them. (7) External obstacles

that prevented successful mobilisation across the industry were the disparate nature of the enterprises and the recession that set in late in 1975. But the major responsibility for the union's decline lay with the union officials. They had unrealistically high expectations that the union would gain rapid and easy recognition and failed to build up an adequately strong workers' base at any of the factories the union organised. Mawbey summarised the reason for the demise of the CWIU in 1975 as follows:

in retrospect the apparent optimism of the time backed by widespread worker militancy in the wake of the 1973 strikes was illusory. union resources, particularly in the form of organising experience, were not sufficient to build and sustain organisation when faced by non-cooperation from management. (8)

In the following year many changes took place in the CWIU which led to the gradual reconstruction of the union.

### 3. Reconstruction of CWIU 1976 - 1977

Early in 1976 an almost complete turnover in staff took place in the CWIU. The secretary resigned for personal reasons and John Mawbey, managing editor of the South African Labour Bulletin, took his place on a part-time basis. He soon discovered that one of the organisers was responsible for the loss of about R350 of the union's funds and the organiser was duly dismissed by the BEC. (9) The remaining organiser was involved in community politics and divided his time between the union and community issues. The shortage and inexperience of staff in the CWIU drew John Copelyn and Mbu Dlamini from the Institute of Industrial Education into the union as well. Gradually the time they spent on the CWIU increased. Especially Dlamini's involvement in the union increased: in the second half of 1976 she worked full-time in the union and became secretary

after the bannings in November 1976.

Different conditions faced the union early in 1976. The recession raised the spectre of retrenchments and worker militancy had receded completely. These necessitated a change in strategy to in-depth organisation inside a few factories on the part of the CWIU. (10) The union was to try and establish works committees as a way to pre-empt management from establishing liaison committees and of creating a working group around which shop stewards could be organised. Once de facto rights had been organised the union was to try and gain recognition.

Natal Chemical Syndicate (NCS) Plastics, a wholly South African owned manufacturer of plastic sheeting and bags, was the first company where the union adopted its new strategy. (11) The company had two plants: the 'South' (plastics) and the 'North' (resins). After union organisation had been established, the workers succeeded in electing a works committee in the 'South' plant where a majority of union members were situated in spite of attempts by management and Labour Department officials to persuade them to elect a liaison committee.

The union attempted to expand the works committee's effectiveness by writing into its constitution provisions for an executive of the committee to meet with management from time to time. Management however soon embarked on a counter-offensive against the union and the works committee. Their first step was to have a liaison committee elected in the 'North' plant and to use it to introduce a 5 cents an hour wage increase in the 'South' plant. They also tried to limit the effectiveness of the works committee by insisting that they would only deal with it through the chairman of the committee. However, with the aid of the Labour Department management subsequently agreed to hold

regular meetings with a more representative grouping than only the chairman of the committee.

The works committee succeeded in making a few small gains which helped the CWIU maintain its presence at NCS Plastics well into 1977. Organisation at the company did however fall away subsequently because the union failed to make significant headway and worker support for the union dwindled.

The CWIU followed a similar strategy at Revertex in Jacobs, a British subsidiary, where it commenced organising in July 1976. Revertex workers had struck during the Durban strikes in 1973 and gained substantial wage increases as a result. Management also established a works committee, but it failed to operate from early on. In late 1973 workers again struck successfully to have a worker reinstated.

Once the workers had elected a shop stewards committee at Revertex they decided to establish a new works committee as a first step towards union recognition. Because the old works committee was defunct, a new statutory works committee was elected in November 1976. It consisted out of union shop stewards.

The new works committee tried to gain clarification from the Department of Labour on which Wage Determination covered Revertex workers. While there appeared to be two Determinations that applied to different groups of workers at Revertex, the Labour Department responded that they regarded neither as applicable. Instead, the Department considered the provisions of the Factories, Building and Machinery Act to apply. The minimum standards of this Act were less advantageous to the workers than were either of the Wage Determinations.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the shop stewards on

the works committee was to conduct a survey of workers' complaints and grievances. The survey showed a variety of grievances covering most conditions of work. Instead of bringing these up piecemeal, the union decided to draw up an agreement that would provide procedures for resolving all the grievances. Management however refused to commit themselves to the agreement stating that workers should bring their grievances one by one. One of the grievances workers listed was the provision of inadequate safety clothing against chemicals.

Safety remained an issue at the factory for the following two years when the union adopted a new strategy that required the law for its implementation. Workers in the factory drew up a comprehensive list of all the breaches of the many provisions of the Factories, Building and Machinery Act. With the aid of an organiser they drew up a memorandum listing only the breaches that they believed they could successfully demand to be corrected by management. At a subsequent meeting in October 1979 the works committee submitted the memorandum to management. Subsequently the union's lawyer sent a letter in which he threatened that unless the requisite changes were made to conform to the provisions of the Act, the company would face court action. (12) According to the union, Revertex management galvanised into action and immediately carried out improvements and provided workers with safety equipment. In the press a Revertex spokesman however denied that safety conditions were inadequate before the union's letter, but did concede that 'certain specific changes were made' as a result of the letter. (13)

The legalistic strategy adopted by the union did involve workers initially and had the desired effect of improving safety conditions. At that time it was felt that there was no other

way of forcing management as workers were too vulnerable to strike. (14) However a subsequent problem that the union organiser experienced at Revertex was that he could not find issues around which he could mobilise workers. (15) It was not until July 1982 that a formal recognition agreement was finally signed. (16)

#### 4. Recognition Campaign at Henkel 1978 - 1979

The CWIU conducted an extended recognition campaign at Henkel S.A. that commenced in September 1978. The company, a subsidiary of Henkel West Germany, was located in a number of different centres. Its Durban plant produced a range of chemicals, soaps, detergents and glues, another plant operated in Johannesburg, and there were depots in three other cities. The workforce at the Durban plant in 1978 comprised about 250 Africans mostly employed as labourers and operators, 40 Indian supervisors and chemical technicians and 10 White foremen.

In 1973 workers from the company went on strike during the wave of mass strikes. After the strikes management established a liaison committee consisting of sixteen elected worker representatives and four management representatives. The CWIU commenced organising Henkel workers in mid-1977 and made good progress in recruiting and members. In January 1978 the union succeeded in having a majority of union members elected onto the liaison committee. (17) Around mid-1978 union membership at Henkel stood at 150 or 60% of the African labour force. (18)

After months of planning the union embarked on a campaign for recognition at Henkel. The secretary wrote to Henkel management informing them that the members had instructed her to request a meeting with management to discuss co-operation between

the union and management. At the same time the issue was placed on the liaison committee agenda by the union representatives. At a committee meeting on 12 September 1978 the matter was raised for the first time and management agreed to refer it to their Board of Directors. (19)

It was not until 5 months later on 12 February 1979 that the CWIU and management met. The union had to exert pressure on management beforehand to agree to the presence of two shop stewards at the meeting. However, 10 days before the meeting management unilaterally and without prior announcement decided to hold a referendum in the plant. The aim of the referendum was to establish the membership of the union. The manner in which it was conducted was potentially intimidatory. Every worker was given a sheet of paper bearing his personal clock number on which he had to record his vote whilst the foreman was watching. The forms were retained by the foreman. In spite of the procedure adopted, most of the union members indicated their membership of the union. At the subsequent meeting management conceded to the union that their referendum found that more or less the number of workers claimed by the union were in fact members. The company was therefore willing to recognise the union, but only as the representative of its members. Rather ominously, management signified their intention to establish a Company Council that would cater for workers at all levels and of all racial groups, and stated that the union would be entitled to representation on the Council. They intended the Company Council to be national with representatives from all South African plants serving on it. (20)

Having been granted an opening by Henkel management, the union pressed ahead with its campaign. It arranged a meeting of all the shop stewards with management on 1 March where a

Memorandum was presented to management. The Memorandum called for the granting of stop order facilities for the union and a procedure for the election of shop stewards. The union wanted the elections to take place during work hours within the company premises under the supervision of the union and management.

By pressing for the close involvement of management the union made a tactical error because this afforded management the opportunity to stall the union's progress in the plant while management proceeded with their own counter-offensive against the union. On 20 March they indicated to the union that final arrangements for the election of shop stewards could not take place until after the Technical Director, Mr C.Abrams, who was the principal negotiator with the union, returned from leave on 24 April 1979.

However the week before Abrams was due to return from leave, he commenced canvassing workers' support for the Company Council in the Durban plant. Only then did it become apparent to the union that Henkel management intended to hold Company Council elections prior to the election of shop stewards. This move drew sharp criticism from the union: in a letter to management they condemned the move. On 3 May all the shop stewards held a meeting with management to discuss the issue and raise the 'union's ill-feelings against management's reaction'. The meeting lasted more than 5 hours. Management defended their move by arguing that they would decide what the priorities of the company were. The shop stewards made it clear that the union members were perturbed by management's reaction 'and that if the Company expected them to participate that would be regarded as an imposition.' (21)

Nevertheless Henkel management proceeded with the election

of a Company Council by calling for nomination of candidates from 7 to 9 May. At a general meeting of union members it was fairly unanimously decided not to participate in the elections. The subsequent boycott of the elections was largely but not completely successful. Management put considerable pressure on African workers during this period to participate in the Council elections. In spite of the pressure the African workers only nominated ten candidates to fill the sixteen seats for Africans on the Council. One of the ten candidates was however a union member, but the union subsequently refused to have any part in the activities of the Council. (22)

Management also disbanded the liaison committee on 16 May. The union interpreted this as a move on the part of management to free themselves from pressures exerted on them by shop stewards in the committee. (23)

Only after all these events were the shop stewards' elections held in the plant. Management first accompanied shop stewards round the plant to explain the election procedure to workers. In their explanation management stated that they did not consider a trade union to be the best method of communicating with its employees because it was an outside organisation, but they were prepared to communicate with the union because a group of workers in the company wanted to be represented by it. (24)

Finally, on 4 June 1979, elections for the shop stewards took place. Out of 183 union members, 173 voted. The voters constituted 72% of the African workforce and 62% of all employees at the Durban plant. Ten out of the twelve elected shop stewards were re-elected to their posts. (25)

The first meeting of the shop stewards with management took place on 23 July. Shop stewards wanted to discuss a 'Memorandum on Duties of Shop Stewards' which included Grievance and

Dismissal Procedures and had been submitted to management beforehand. Management agreed to meet monthly with the shop stewards and that the shop stewards could call meetings within the plant among themselves or with general membership provided these took place during workers' free time and did not involve too many people. However, management decided that the Grievance and Dismissal Procedures had to be referred to the Company Council since it affected everybody in the Company. The shop stewards challenged this on the grounds that the Company itself had to decide, but management responded that they had to get views from a body that represented the majority of workers in the whole company and not just the union which only represented a group of workers in the Durban plant alone. (26)

Management proceeded to use the Company Council as a device for stalling and undercutting the union in the plant. At the following meeting a month later they informed the shop stewards that they had not yet received responses on the Memorandum from the Company Council at other centres. The Grievance and Dismissal Procedures could therefore not be implemented. Management also indicated that they did not intend to refer decisions taken by the Company Council back to the union. This was because the Council represented everybody and its decisions would be binding on all employees. (27)

The CWIU realised that they had to launch a campaign against the Company Council. Up to then they had accepted management's word about the existence of the Council at other centres. Investigations by FOSATU however revealed that the Council did not exist in the Johannesburg plant. (28) This discovery forced management onto the defensive and they were forced to spell out their own response to the proposed Grievance and Dismissal

Procedures. In a letter to the union secretary on 14 November 1979 Henkel management presented their basic principles on grievance and dismissal procedures. (29) The letter failed to spell out any procedures and suggested that management either had no concrete proposal in mind or was deliberately being uninformative and obstructionist.

After two and a half years of sustained organisation at Henkel, the CWIU had made considerable progress towards gaining recognition on the shop floor in that shop stewards were holding monthly meetings with management and having report back meetings with the members. There was however frustration on the part of the union officials who felt that the company was delaying and obstructing the granting of full union recognition. (30) It was not until 1982 after a strike by Henkel workers and a consumer boycott of Henkel's detergents and glues had been called that a formal recognition agreement was signed with the union. (31)

##### 5. The CWIU in 1979

Except for the period of mass membership early in the life of the union due to the upsurge in workers' militancy after the Durban strikes, the CWIU remained a small union up to the end of 1979. This was the case in spite of the fact that it started organising some new factories and tried to revive old factories such as AE&CI and Quality Products with the appointment of more staff in the beginning of 1979. (32) In October 1979 the signed up membership of the union was about 415 and the usual paid up membership around 130. Although the union was open to all workers, only Africans had joined. (33)

A majority of members came from Revertex and Henkel which were the only two factories that the secretary considered to be reasonably organised and that had shop stewards committees. A

steering committee existed at Prolux Paints and the union had strong contacts at a number of other factories. In the secretary's opinion a factory was well organised when members attended meetings, paid their subscriptions and had faced the hazards of approaching management. By these criteria she did not deem any of the factories organised by the CWIU to be well organised in October 1979. (34)

The union's BEC appeared to be fragile as it was composed of only two shop steward representatives from Revertex and two from Henkel. The officials ensured that the alternatives were also present and members from other factories were invited to observe the meetings.

The lack of progress and growth in the CWIU led union officials to undertake a very risky recognition campaign at British Industrial Plastics (BIP) in Pinetown. BIP was one of three companies under common ownership. The other two were Turnall and Ferodo. Ferodo was being organised by MAWU and Turnall by the Transport & General Workers' Union. As workers from the three plants were unaware that they were all under common ownership, officials from the three unions and FOSATU took the initiative in mounting a tripartite recognition campaign at all three companies simultaneously before discussing the plan with workers and their representatives. Once the issue was raised with workers from the three companies at a joint weekend seminar in October 1979, MAWU decided to withdraw from the campaign because their organisation was not advanced enough at Ferodo.

CWIU however decided to proceed with their recognition campaign at BIP even though they were still poorly organised at the company. BIP had two plants, an old and a new plant. At the new plant the union membership was close to 60 out of 70

employees, but at the old plant the union only had 10 members out of about 65 with no viable steering committee. The union officials' plan was to approach management for recognition soon in the hope that it would be some time before the union would be required to prove its membership at the company. In the meantime the union would try to mobilise workers around unsafe and bad working conditions in order to build up membership to the requisite level. (35)

On 12 December 1979 the union secretary accompanied by the FOSATU general secretary held their first meeting with the BIP management who were sympathetic to the union's overtures. The secretary's hopes were that the approach would help the union get organised at the old plant. The strategy however failed even though the recognition drive did carry on for fairly long. (36)

At the end of 1979 the CWIU thus had only limited shop floor organisation effectively concentrated at two companies and had not succeeded in establishing a stable BEC yet. This was in part due to the fact that the chemical industry was a dislocated one having either scattered small factories interspersed with enormous plants. (37)

Subsequently the union expanded rapidly from its small beginnings. In 1980 it opened a branch in Transvaal and up to 1982 it grew very rapidly as political and economic conditions for organising African workers improved. By 1984 the union was recognised in 41 plants and had 21 formal recognition agreements. (38)

## Chapter 6

### The Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU)

#### 1. The General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund 1972- 1975 Forerunner of the TGWU

The first TGWU was, according to oral tradition, started in 1973 by David Hemson who organised stevedore workers from Grindrod. (1) Membership cards were apparently printed and handed out, but Hemson's absence from Durban and his banning in January 1974 led to the rapid demise of the union.

The TGWU which is the subject of this chapter was the last union to be established under the auspices of TUACC in Natal. It was founded in July 1975 when the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund (GFWBF) formally decided to transform itself into the TGWU. To understand how and why this happened it is necessary to review the history of the GFWBF briefly.

The factors that led to the founding of the GFWBF in September 1972 have been explained above. The aim of the GFWBF was to assist in the formation of African trade unions. Halton Cheadle explained the strategy adopted by the founders:

The idea was to set up a general Benefit Fund amongst all workers and to organise them in sectors. As the sectors became strong enough with a sufficient number of members to hold together a union, they would break away from the Benefit Fund, but link up with it for the benefits. (2)

This remained the intention of the GFWBF. At an Executive Committee meeting of the Fund a year after it was founded, the chairman stated that

the original motive behind the establishment of the Benefit Fund was to organise workers who in turn would split into different Unions according to industry. He said that everyone had known that the Benefit Fund was only a 'friendly word' for trade union. (3)

In order to safeguard the GFWBF an attempt was made to

register it under the Friendly Societies Act. The early indications from the Registrar of Friendly Societies were favourable. He indicated in correspondence that the Benefit Fund may obtain temporary registration for 5 years, but required amendments to its constitution first. (4) Negotiations continued between the Registrar and the GFWBF on the criteria the Fund had to meet in order to register. Although the GFWBF made attempts to meet these requirements, it did not actually gain registration. At an Executive Committee meeting in December 1973 Harriet Bolton informed the members that the Registrar had not said that the Benefit Fund must stop functioning and that, in her opinion, it would ultimately be registered and that the members should not have any worry. (5) Given these assurances, the GFWBF carried on operating.

Although the Benefit Fund already had over 1000 signed on members when it was launched in September 1972, it grew rapidly after the 1973 Durban strikes. (6) By August 1973 it had risen to 6000 members, a month later to over 8000, and by June 1974 membership stood at no less than 18000. With union members who were covered by the Fund's funeral benefits its total membership was 22000. (7)

Commensurate with the growth in members, the Benefit Fund also accumulated considerable funds from members' subscriptions. In the 8 month period from April to November 1973 it collected R2045 per month on average in subscriptions. Its accumulated funds accordingly increased from R3580 at the beginning of April to R9460 at the end of November 1973. (8) With the upsurge in membership, funds continued increasing over the following year.

The very success of the GFWBF plus the fact that it was organically linked with the trade unions in TUACC brought about

its end in the form of state repression. On 20 May 1974 members of the Criminal Investigation Department of the South African Police closed in on the GFWBF on the grounds that they were running an unregistered Friendly Society and removed all its files, records and minutes. (9) Two officials of the Benefit Fund and two from Central Administrative Services were subsequently charged and found guilty in January 1975 for contravening the Friendly Societies Act and encouraging workers to join an unregistered Fund. (10)

Immediately after the police visit officials of the GFWBF and others started planning the future of the Fund since the danger existed that the authorities could get a court order to stop it from functioning. (11) After debate on whether to transform the GFWBF into industrial unions or a general union it was decided to turn it into a Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). An Executive Committee resolution to that effect was taken in September 1974. The resolution was a sign of the growing confidence on the part of workers who accepted that it would be safer to form a union as there was no law prohibiting its formation. Another argument in favour of a union was that it was not compelled by the state to register whereas Friendly Societies could not operate without being registered. (12)

Two realities faced the founders of the TGWU. One was the vast number of members in the Benefit Fund. The other was the fact that there was a sufficient number of members from some of the companies and with a strong enthusiasm to make their organisation feasible, whereas the overwhelming number of Benefit Fund members were scattered across such a diverse range of companies and industries that they could not be organised successfully. In view of this, they decided to establish two Sectors in the TGWU: an Industrial Sector comprising the larger

companies with enough members and support to organise, and a General Sector where members would only be provided with basic services such as handling individual workers' grievances. Once workers from a particular factory in this Sector had been organised, they would be transferred to the Industrial Sector. (13)

As regards the funds accumulated by the GFWBF, which were in the order of R23 000, the officials planned to follow the Friendly Societies Act which laid down that the assets had to be distributed to the members. At a general meeting of the Benefit Fund members the officials would put a resolution to the meeting that the members renounce their assets to the TGWU. (14)

Although the groundwork was laid for the TGWU Industrial Sector during the latter half of 1974, it was formally founded on 20 July 1975 when the first meeting of the Shop Stewards' Council (SSC) was held. According to the constitution the SSC consisted of members appointed on a proportional basis from the different functioning shop stewards committees. (Clauses 11.4.1 and 2) The shop stewards committees were required 'to manage the affairs of the Union inside the factory'. (Clause 11.3.1) Because it was envisaged that the SSC could be a large body provision was made for the election of a smaller Branch Executive Committee (BEC) from within their ranks. (Clause 10.2.b) The BEC was made 'subject to the general direction and control of branch general meetings and the Shop Stewards Council' (Clause 10.4) and all decisions taken by it were required to be 'subject to the approval of the Shop Stewards Council'. (Clause 11.4.3.c) Constitutionally, therefore, the TGWU was structured to facilitate workers' control and participation in the union. This was part of a general development in TUACC unions even

though it was not built into other unions' constitutions until several years after the shop stewards' had assumed a more central role. (15)

The first SSC meeting was attended by representatives from five different enterprises who were guided through the meeting by Mike Murphy who was acting secretary of the TGWU. He explained the basic policy and practices that were envisaged for the union in its new constitution. Amongst other things, he stressed that control of the union lay in the hands of the Council delegates and that they could actually change the policy if they considered it necessary. The method of controlling the union's money collected from workers was carefully explained to all the delegates on the basic understanding that the union could only operate well if it was financially secure and money was properly controlled. Murphy also explained to the delegates that the constitution made provision for them to elect a Branch Executive Committee. Election of a BEC was postponed until the Council had more members. The delegates wished to have 6 weeks before the next meeting in order to give them sufficient time to read the constitution thoroughly before they discussed it. (16)

The General Sector of the TGWU remained under the auspices of the Executive Committee of the GFWBF until the second SSC meeting in September 1975. Responsibility for the General Sector was then formally transferred to the SSC. (17) A BEC consisting of six members was elected on 19 October 1975, but it never functioned as a separate Committee. Initially it was decided in February 1976 that the SSC and BEC should meet together because the Council was still relatively small. By May 1976 it was common practice for the SSC to fulfill the role played by the BEC in other unions. (Aff. Alexander Erwin, 19 Jan 78) Over time the SSC together with the union's organisers

became known as the TGWU BEC. (18)

The constitution of the TGWU as well as the first SSC meeting, spelled out the ideal policy and practices for the union. There was however to be a big difference between the ideal and the reality over the following two years.

## 2. Decline, Division and Reorganisation of the TGWU 1976-1977

The TGWU commenced with a flying start. On being founded it had about 25 000 card-carrying members in the two Sectors. Of these about one-third were paid up. In the Industrial Sector there were seventeen firms in Durban and six in Pietermaritzburg where the workers had shown an interest in organising themselves. It was claimed that sixteen of these had shop steward groups that were functioning on a regular basis. (19) These claims were probably an exaggeration given the fact that only five shop stewards committees were represented at the first SSC meeting. Also in August 1975 the General Sector collected R2491 in subscriptions suggesting a paid up membership of about 5600. (20)

An indication of the organisational level within the TGWU during 1976 was given by the participation of factory representatives in the SSC. In Durban up to ten factories were at one time or the other represented on the SSC. Of these union membership in two factories never advanced while union organisation in two others collapsed and two factories closed down. This left a core of four factories that sent representatives to the majority of SSC meetings. In Pietermaritzburg there were also ten factories that were represented at one time or another. At four of these factories union membership was never strong and no representatives were sent forward. In two other factories membership collapsed

leaving only four factories in Pietermaritzburg as part of the core on the SSC. (21)

However, in November 1976 Mike Murphy, who was again acting secretary of the TGWU was banned along with seven other officials in TUACC. This act of state repression was a setback for the union because it lost the services of a competent intellectual. Around the same time Thizi Khumalo and some other organisers of the TGWU sparked off conflict in the union and between themselves and TUACC. The upshot of it all was that the TGWU's organisation declined severely. At the five meetings of the SSC after November 1976 up to July 1977 attendance became erratic. In Durban in particular the core factories were being neglected by organisers and becoming increasingly isolated. (22) During this period the conflict escalated until it came to a dramatic head on 11 June 1977 when a majority of members of what was commonly regarded as the BEC of the TGWU decided to disaffiliate the TGWU from TUACC. In order to understand why and how such a decision was taken, it is necessary to trace the history of the conflict in more detail.

#### Challenge from Thizi Khumalo and Others

In March 1976 Thizi Khumalo was transferred from the NUTW to the General Sector of the TGWU because of his limitations as an organiser and his disruptive role in the NUTW. (See chapter on NUTW above) On the TGWU his initial task was to deal with complaints of individual workers. His transfer had however filled him with resentment that was soon reflected in his actions. On the BEC of the union he continuously criticised the union secretary, Mbu Dlamini, who sat on the TUACC Secretariat. He held her up as the mouthpiece of a White-dominated Secretariat and made life so difficult for her that she resigned from the

TGWU in the first half of 1976. (23)

Khumalo's role and influence also extended beyond the TGWU. He participated in general staff meetings which he made almost unworkable with disruptive tactics. After MAWU had collapsed at the end of 1976 he attempted to extend his influence to the MAWU BEC and tried to prevent June Nala from being appointed secretary. (24) When that failed, he and his supporters unsuccessfully tried to split MAWU. (25)

During 1976 Thizi Khumalo's most significant achievement was to build up a group around himself that constituted a majority on the TGWU BEC. This group consisted of two organisers based in Pietermaritzburg as well as seven SSC members, a key member being Daniel Khumalo who was appointed chairman of the SSC in August 1976. The only members of the BEC whose complete loyalty and support Thizi Khumalo was unable to obtain were Isabella Shongwe, who was appointed secretary of the TGWU in April 1977, and two SSC members one of whom was the treasurer. (26)

The Khumalo group drove a wedge between the TGWU and TUACC over the question of organisers' bonuses at the end of 1976. In view of the shortage of money of all the unions barring the TGWU, the TUACC Secretariat recommended that those unions which felt that they could afford something could put it into a common pool to be shared equally between all the organisers. However at a BEC meeting of the TGWU on 4 December 1976 the Khumalo group swayed the meeting to pay bonuses well in excess of the usual ones, but only to the TGWU organisers. TUACC immediately noted an objection and tried to discuss the matter urgently with the TGWU BEC, but these attempts were blocked. (27)

In response to Thizi Khumalo's activities the TUACC Council took the extreme and controversial step of dismissing him as an organiser of the TGWU on 13 February 1977. The decision was

taken on the basis of the bonuses controversy, his disruption of the NUTW and the MAWU BEC, allegations of financial corruption against him, and organiser discontent with his activities. (28)

The dismissal of Thizi Khumalo as an organiser of the TGWU by the TUACC Council was formally unconstitutional because the Council did not have the authority to dismiss an official of an affiliated union. The union itself was vested with the constitutional power and procedures to dismiss an official or member (TGWU Constitution, Clause 14) whereas the TUACC Council had the power to expel or discipline a union or other organisation affiliated to TUACC. (TUACC Constitution operative at the time, Clauses 5.c.1.f and 9)

Alec Erwin, who was secretary of TUACC at the time, felt that the Council's action in firing Khumalo was totally justified:

I have absolutely no hesitation in feeling that we should have dismissed him. I think it was essential that he be dismissed because the effect he was having on the TGWU and on other unions was just continually negative and disruptive. If TUACC was going to be rebuilt after the bannings and get any coherence, the disruptive influences of Khumalo somehow had to go. Either his line won or it lost.

It seems to me to be a formalism to argue that he should have been dismissed by the TGWU. In the circumstances its BEC was not effective in that the TGWU had disintegrated badly. The BEC was so under his control that they could not dismiss him. (29)

The dismissal of Khumalo thus highlighted a dilemma within the independent unions in TUACC at such an early stage of their emergence. The constitutions were the intellectuals' input into the structural development of the unions. They laid down the rules according to which the unions' members, office-bearers and officials had to operate in order to become democratic institutions. But the organisational structures were still being filled out: the TGWU, for instance, was still in such an

early transitional stage that it was not yet operating according to its own constitution. Constitutional practices were still thus not yet embedded in the TGWU. (30)

Sociologically this raises the problem of determining the status of the union's constitution in such a situation. It would be too formalistic to raise the constitution to an absolute norm without considering the stage of development of the TGWU as well as the broader objectives of TUACC and the extent to which these were being violated by Khumalo as an organiser in the union. However the pitfall of concluding that 'might is right' also has to be avoided. In evaluating such an internal conflict it is probably most appropriate to consider the methods that were actually used by both sides and what the consequences were of embarking on such a course of action.

Officials within TUACC decided that the broader objectives of the movement were more important than a strict adherence to the constitution. As a result a power struggle ensued between the TUACC officials on the one hand and Khumalo with his supporters on the other hand.

Khumalo was at first taken aback by TUACC Council's decision to fire him. Instead of challenging the competence of the Council to do so, he requested another meeting to review the decision to terminate his services. In a letter to TUACC three days after his dismissal, he maintained that (spelling as in original letter)

I desputed all accusation levelled against me but the meeting did not seem keen to listen to my side of the matter...If we work stuetly according to the Union Constutition & Procedeuse my side of the matter should have been heard before a decesion was taken, but I was desmessed from the meeting without an oportuntuy to reply to accusation, which teminated my services I now therefore request the TUACC that terminated my services to convene a second meeting quickly and restate the same accusation and then allon me to answer to then. (31)

Khumalo also included threats in his letter:

if these option are not used I will have no alternative but to press that the matter be heard in court. If Union wishes to presive peace they should co-operate and let the matter be also descussed again. (32)

The meeting requested by Khumalo was not held. Instead, TUACC continued to press home its case and instructed Central Administration Services (CAS) to carry out a more detailed investigation into the allegations of financial corruption on the part of Thizi Khumalo and his group. As a result of these investigations a letter was written by CAS to the TGWU BEC on 25 February 1977 listing a series of malpractices in connection with the signing out and cashing up of subscription receipt books of the TGWU. Some of these malpractices were however as much due to the negligence of CAS as the TGWU. There were however a number of receipt books issued to the TGWU during the latter half of 1976 that had not been cashed up yet and three unused receipt books had been stolen from the record room of CAS. It was also found that Thizi Khumalo had sytematically handed in less monies than he had actually collected, but that he had repaid all these monies from his wages on later occasions. At the time of his dismissal he had still not repaid R131,60, but this was deducted with his consent from his final wage payment. (33)

The TGWU BEC responded defiantly to these actions on the part of TUACC and CAS. It decided on 26 February to ignore the letter from CAS and to reinstate Khumalo as an organiser of the TGWU. TUACC thereupon sent a delegation to the next BEC meeting of the TGWU on 19 March to discuss Khumalo's dismissal and the possible misappropriation of TGWU finances. The chairman of the BEC however refused to allow the delegation to attend the meeting on the grounds that they wanted to discuss items that were not on the agenda. (34)

Relationships between TUACC and the TGWU BEC was however reaching breaking point as the Khumalo group continued their defiance. On 11 June 1977 they held an irregularly constituted meeting of the BEC at which they decided that the TGWU would break away from TUACC. An emergency Council meeting of TUACC was called, but their efforts were of no avail. A joint meeting called between the TGWU BEC and the TUACC Secretariat on 27 June was not attended by the BEC. In the light of these events it was decided by the TUACC Secretariat to set up a Commission that would collect the TGWU receipt books in its Pietermaritzburg office, but members of the Khumalo group removed them beforehand and the Commission returned empty handed. (35)

The Khumalo group proceeded to give effect to their decision to disaffiliate the TGWU from TUACC. Payment of subscriptions into the union's bank account was stopped and deposited into a new savings account that the Khumalo group opened in the name of the TGWU. (36) At a meeting of the TGWU BEC on 5 July they took a decision of considerable importance to change the signatories of the TGWU bank account, a decision which would have given them control over the finances of the union. The TGWU held considerable financial resources at the time and had no less than R24 065 in accumulated funds. (37) About R18 000 of this money was collected from workers by the Benefit Fund and was being held in trust by the TGWU. (38) Three days later they took the first steps to actually change the signatories. (39)

The following day members of the Khumalo group removed furniture and receipt books from the TUACC offices in Pietermaritzburg to a new venue from which they intended to run the union. (40) It became clear to TUACC that they would have to take rapid and extreme action to prevent the Khumalo group

from abusing the receipt books removed from the TUACC offices and from walking off with the workers' money held in trust by the TGWU. (41)

Up to that stage attempts had been made to resolve all differences by means of dialogue, but TUACC decided it had become necessary to take urgent legal action. On 14 July a Court Order was served on the four most influential members of the Khumalo group restraining them from having any dealings in the affairs of the TGWU and from handling the funds of the union. As a result the accounts of the TGWU were frozen pending the outcome of the court action. The application also requested that a Commission of Enquiry be set up to investigate the affairs of the BEC and the holding of an Annual General Meeting to consider the Commission's report. (42)

The success of the TUACC strategy depended on gaining support from the rank and file members of the TGWU at a general meeting. Constitutionally TUACC also realised that, since control of the union was vested in the Shop Stewards Council which consisted of representatives from the shop stewards committees, the side that had the support of shop floor organisation of the union would control the union. (43) With these strategic considerations in mind TUACC vigorously assisted Isabella Shongwe, the secretary, in the rebuilding of the TGWU's organisation which had splintered and almost collapsed by July 1977. (44)

There were two stages in the reorganisation drive of the TGWU. The first was aimed at reviving the former core factories of the union. In Durban they succeeded in getting three of the four core factories to become active again with functioning shop stewards committees. In Pietermaritzburg they were less successful and only one of the four factories was resuscitated.

The second stage in attempting to rebuild the union consisted of organising hitherto unorganised factories with enthusiastic members inherited from the Benefit Fund. In all six factories, two in Durban and four in Pietermaritzburg, developed rapidly and established shop stewards committees who nominated representatives to the Shop Stewards Council by the end of September 1977. At that stage there were sufficient functioning shop stewards committees for a resuscitated Shop Stewards Council to commence operating again. None of the members of the Khumalo group served on the newly reconstructed SSC. (45)

On 23 October 1977 the new SSC called a general meeting of the TGWU that was attended by 207 members. The members of the SSC were introduced to the members and they, along with a 'Commission of Enquiry' that had been appointed, were mandated to continue the legal action. (46)

The Application for a Court Order was in the meanwhile being fought out on a legal level with affidavits and replying affidavits. Neither TUACC nor the Khumalo group was able to gain the upper hand and the matter was settled out of court on 4 November 1977 with each party bearing its own costs. (47) The Court Order had however given the TUACC side strategic breathing space in which to rebuild the TGWU and reconstitute the Shop Stewards Council. In the process the Khumalo group was being isolated as a minority within the union. (48)

However the battle for control of the TGWU with its trust monies was by no means over yet. The reconstituted Shop Stewards Council of the TGWU decided to call an Annual General Meeting of the union on 4 December 1977 at which finality was to be reached on the question of who controls the union. In response to this the old BEC of the union comprising the Khumalo

group and claiming to represent the TGWU obtained an urgent Court Order restraining the other side from holding an Annual General Meeting. (49)The interdict was based on the argument that, according to the constitution, control of the union was vested in the hands of the BEC in the absence of a National Executive Committee. (50)

In the opposing notice it was argued that the old BEC of the TGWU no longer represented the union, but that it had been superseded by the resuscitated Shop Stewards Council which was in fact constitutionally the controlling body of the union in the absence of a National Executive Committee. The resuscitated Shop Stewards Council indicated that it was they who had the right and intention to recover the outstanding receipt books and records of the union which were in the possession of the old BEC. (51)

The conflict between the two sides was also settled out of court, but with the difference that the resuscitated Shop Stewards Council was victorious in the struggle for control over the TGWU and its funds. It was agreed that they would hold an Annual General Meeting and that TUACC property and receipt books would be returned. The outcome of it all was that the TGWU remained in TUACC while the Khumalo group totally withdrew from TUACC. Thizi Khumalo retained his commitment to the African working class and carried on organising workers into relatively small trade unions. (52)

The methods TUACC used in ousting Khumalo thus consisted of firstly dismissing him unconstitutionally and thereupon using a combination of strategies including negotiations with him, legal action and rebuilding of the TGWU at the shopfloor level in order to regain control of it. Except for the initial unconstitutional action, these methods fell within the principles

and objectives of TUACC. The consequences of the dismissal were however not successful in that the TGWU was left in charge of a group of incompetent organisers who were unable to make much headway with the union up to the end of 1979. (53) The one exception to this was the TGWU's organisational advances at Forbo-Krommenie, although the organiser in charge of the operation was from the TUACC Workers' Project (which is discussed below).

### 3. Recognition Campaign at Forbo-Krommenie 1978 - 1979

After the internal conflict in the TGWU was resolved in the first half of 1978, the union was able to turn its undivided attention to workplace organisation. In line with other unions in TUACC, the TGWU decided to concentrate its efforts on a very small number of firms. In particular, the union decided to conduct recognition campaigns at one or two foreign-owned companies so that the union could use international leverage to help it.

The first company at which the union commenced was Forbo-Krommenie, a manufacturer of synthetic floor coverings and other products and subsidiary of a Swiss-based multinational corporation, Forbo A.G.. The corporation also had major plants in France, Germany, Holland and Sweden. The South African plant in Mobeni employed about 110 African and 19 Indian workers. When the union started organising at the plant a liaison committee for African workers had been in existence for several years. The committee reflected management's paternalistic and dominating attitude towards its African labour force. Management did not intend the committee as a negotiating body: its objectives were to provide a means whereby matters

affecting the interests and welfare of the Bantu worker may be discussed' as well as being 'a means whereby management may explain its policy to the workers'. (54) The committee was extremely limited in its functions. It could 'only recommend a course of action' and was explicitly prohibited from reversing or amending any instruction given by management. It was also not allowed to 'interfere with any disciplinary action undertaken by management'. (55)

Although the first union members at Forbo-Krommenie were recruited in October 1977, concerted organisation commenced in June 1978 when the union gained majority membership in the plant. The union adopted a multi-pronged strategy in its organisational drive and recognition campaign. Its organiser at the plant, Gardiner Gladile, emphasized work place organisation and built up a strong shop stewards committee with an impressive depth of leadership. As leaders were dismissed by management during the ensuing struggle, others came forward to take their place. In addition the union made use of the liaison committee in order to gain a foothold at the company. It succeeded in electing five shop stewards onto the six seats for worker representatives on the committee. In addition the union's strategy included the use of legal action and international pressure as circumstances determined. In order to clarify and evaluate the union's strategy it is necessary to give an account of the major events in the recognition struggle.

The first issue around which the union mobilised workers was their discontent with a supervisor of the plant who was wont to be abusive and use foul language when dealing with African workers. The issue was also used as an opportunity on 27 June 1978 to request union recognition. At the subsequent liaison committee meeting on 4 July management was adamant that it would

not allow "third parties" to represent African workers even though the union represented 70% of the African labour force. The Production Director, Mr D C Cohen, was of the opinion that the company could solve its problems internally as a large family. (56)

The TGWU had in the meanwhile written to Forbo-Krommenie requesting a meeting to discuss union recognition. As a result, a meeting took place on 6 July between three union and TUACC officials and two managers including Cohen. Confronted for the first time by strongly voiced criticisms and independent views, the experience "was not very pleasant" for Cohen who made it clear that he was opposed to recognising the union and argued that "it was not the company's policy to permit outside interference". The only concrete outcome of the meeting was that a copy of the TGWU constitution would be sent to the company. (57)

The union carried on organising workers actively while management tried to squash the union by ignoring it. At a liaison committee meeting on 27 July management informed the representatives that they had referred the question of union recognition to a 'higher authority' in Switzerland. This spurred the TGWU secretary to write directly to the Forbo head office in Zurich asking the managing director to clarify his company's policy on the union's request for recognition. A copy was sent to the local management. (58)

In order to counter this move on the part of the TGWU management sent a telegram to Zurich warning the parent company that they could expect a letter from the union. This was followed up by a letter providing misleading and damaging information on the TGWU:

The Transport and General Union is not recognised and not registered but is suspect for political aims (Lenin/Marxist) and had only one agreement namely with a company, Smith & Nephew of Pinetown, but this agreement meanwhile has expired and was not renewed. (59)

The letter also revealed general managerial strategy towards the TUACC unions and ended up advising the parent company how to respond to the union:

The overall attitude by various bodies and industries is not to sign up with this type of Trade Unions and/or write to them. It is learned that as soon as you write, they use this letter (letterhead and signed) as an evidence and tool for local and overseas to work themselves into recognition and get established. We therefore suggest you do not write but instead send a telegram reading as follows:

Quote:

Thank you for your letter dated 31.8.78 including copies. We are aware of how you came in contact with our factory in Durban. We are also aware that your government is awaiting the report of the Wiehahn and Riekert Commission and we have instructed our company in Durban to await the Government's White Paper on this subject which is expected early in 1979.

Unquote (60)

The parent company followed the advise from the Durban management closely. After further telex and telephonic communication between the parent and subsidiary company, a telegram was sent to the TGWU on 25 Sept 1978 saying that the company was awaiting the government White Paper and that the parent company did not have any influence over the local company which was in the best position to handle the issue. (61) The union replied that it could not accept that the parent company had no influence over the local company and pointed out that there was no legal obstacle preventing recognition of the unregistered TGWU. (62)

Frustration and anger was however building up on the workers side with management's policy of not responding to their demand to be represented by the TGWU and the company's refusal to respond to the union in writing. On the other side management was rather bewildered by the strength of the union's onslaught

and tried to persuade the workers that the company was providing and caring adequately for the workers. At a liaison committee meeting on 18 September an hour and a half was rather fruitlessly spent on explaining the intricacies of the company's pension scheme to the workers' representatives. The directors also spoke of study bursaries and housing loans to workers, but the representatives pressed them for a date by which they could expect a clear response from the company on union recognition. They were promised one within a month. (63)

As the month wore on and no response came from Forbo-Krommenie the shop stewards requested a meeting with management on 17 October in order to discuss union recognition and other issues. The request was done in writing and signed by twelve shop stewards. Management's response was to call the shop stewards in one by one and, according to the union, to reprimand them for requesting a meeting outside the formal liaison committee channels. On the same day a petition requesting union recognition and signed by no less than 84 workers was handed in to management. The TUACC secretary also phoned the company's managing director on 17 October, the last day by which management had promised to respond only to be told that the company had decided not to recognise the union after consulting various bodies like SEIFSA. The managing director refused to put anything down in writing. (64)

On 17 October the TGWU's struggle for recognition and Forbo-Krommenie management's attempt to beat off the union were both deadlocked. Three days later an incident in the factory gave management the opportunity to take strong-arm action against 13 union members when the Production Director, Dirk Cohen, angrily reprimanded a worker, Philip Hlope, and told him to leave. Hlope

interpreted this as a dismissal and left. (65)

The following work-day morning thirteen workers including an outspoken shop steward, Israel Sisoka, all of whom were from Hlope's department, did not go straight to their work posts, but rather proceeded to Cohen's office to enquire what the reasons were for Hlope's dismissal. A dispute developed between the workers and Cohen over whether Hlope had been dismissed or had walked off with Cohen insisting that he had left of his own free will. Cohen became very angry when the workers claimed he was not telling the truth. He then told workers that he would give them six minutes to decide whether they were going to return to work or leave. All thirteen workers thereupon left the premises within six minutes. (66)

On the same day as well as the following two days several attempts were made by the TGWU to have the thirteen workers, who were all union members, reinstated. On each day the workers returned to the factory to resume work unconditionally, but Cohen refused to reinstate them unless he could interview them individually and they were willing to sign a conditions of employment form that he was unwilling to show them beforehand. The conditions specified that the workers would acknowledge the liaison committee as the exclusive representative body of the workers and that a breach of the undertaking could lead to automatic discharge. (67) Cohen's intention was to make it clear to the thirteen workers that the company was not going to be forced into dealing with the union.

Finally, on 25 October, the workers agreed to the conditions laid down by Cohen and were all reinstated with the exception of Israel Sisoka. Cohen refused to continue his employment on the grounds that he was 'extremely aggressive and argumentative'. (68)

An analysis of the work stoppage indicated that what occurred was in fact a lock-out.

At no stage did the workers present the employer Mr Cohen with an ultimatum to say either you do this or we refuse to work. In fact Mr Cohen himself imposed the condition that the workers either accepted his version or they left the factory. What had occurred was that the employer had breached a rule of the factory and then given workers the choice of either working for him subject to the breach of the rule by the employer or to leave the factory. (69)

In terms of the law such an action on the part of Cohen constituted a lockout.

In spite of that the state decided to intervene on the side of management by prosecuting all 13 workers for striking illegally. The prosecution backfired when it took the magistrate less than 2 minutes to arrive at a verdict that the workers were not guilty of striking. He found that the workers had not stopped working with the object of getting Hlope reinstated. (70)

The TGWU decided to fight the victimisation of Sisoka on the legal front and on 30 October 1978 it applied for a Court Order to have him reinstated on the grounds that the company had indeed taken part in a lock-out and that Sisoka was the victim of the lock-out. (71) The application was opposed by Forbo-Krommenie who contended that it would not be in their interests to re-employ Sisoka 'in view of his extremely aggressive and argumentative behaviour'. (72) The case was finally settled out of court in April 1979. The agreement was that the company would pay all the union's legal expenses and would also pay Sisoka two months' salary. (73)

The settlement between the company and the union was however done without any consultation of the Forbo-Krommenie shop stewards or the workers who were locked out. Six months after

the agreement was reached the shop stewards committee was still under the impression that the locked out workers would be able to claim their lost wages for the duration of the lock-out. The shop stewards had gone to considerable trouble to try and secure the relevant workers' pay-slips on which to base their claims. They were only informed in October 1979 by one of the organisers who was also a member of the FOSATU Legal Sub-Committee that the union had already agreed in writing that it had no further legal claims against Forbo-Krommenie. The shop stewards were perturbed and angry that what they considered as their rightful claims had been signed away by the union without consulting them first. Their attitude was reflected by the indignant question of the chairman of the shop stewards committee: 'we won the lock-out case, so what's happened to our money?' (74)

The outcome of the lock-out in October 1978 from the point of view of union membership and support was that only one active shop steward had been dismissed. Forbo-Krommenie management was still faced by African employees who overwhelmingly supported the TGWU. Amongst the workers were strong leaders who served as shop stewards. Management continued trying to isolate the union activists by means of threats, intimidation and dismissals. Between January and March 1979 a small number of shop stewards including Greenoaks Makhanya were fired for trivial reasons. (75)

Then, in April 1979 Forbo-Krommenie management suddenly adopted a new and more conciliatory approach towards the union. This was in all probability due to the international campaign that the TGWU had embarked on early in 1979 in Europe. As a result trade union centres in Holland and Sweden had taken up the TGWU's recognition campaign with workers at the Dutch and Swedish plants of Forbo. Soon the Swedish shop stewards and management were in a dispute about the facts of the situation in South Africa. The

Swedish management went as far as offering to sponsor the chairman of the shop stewards on a fact-finding visit to South Africa.

These developments must have been relayed to the South African management as, for the first time ever, the managing director wrote to the union acknowledging receipt of a letter enquiring what recognition the union wanted. The union replied that it desired check-off facilities for union dues, access to the factory for union officials, recognition of the shop stewards as workers' representatives, as well as dismissal, retrenchment and arbitration procedures.

Hopes of a quick and easy path to recognition for the union were rapidly dispelled with the next letter from the managing director, Mr W. Mets, in May in which he indicated that the company intended setting up a Works Council and he invited the union to participate in the system and to meet him. (76) On 15 June, without first consulting either the shop stewards or the union officials, management put up conspicuous notices announcing a meeting of shop stewards and the TGWU together with the old liaison committee and management on the 20th to discuss setting up a Works Council. At a shop stewards meeting they decided that they would not attend the meeting, but that they would rather meet with management to discuss union recognition. When management met similar resistance from the union organiser Gladile the meeting was cancelled. (77)

Soon thereafter the union members again attempted to gain recognition when 70 of them signed a letter to management requesting a general meeting inside the factory during working hours. They wanted the managing director to explain his reasons for refusing to recognise the union to them. Although he did not accede to their request, Mets was willing to meet a small

delegation of workers. As a result the union shop stewards and Mets met three times during July 1979. He tried unsuccessfully to persuade them to accept and work through the Works Council and the outcome of the meetings was inconclusive. (78) Thereafter management's attitude towards the union hardened somewhat as it became more difficult for shop stewards to gain access to management. The shop stewards wrote a letter to management requesting a meeting with them on 22 October 1979, but their request was ignored. (79)

On the international front the TGWU had urged the Swedish union at the Forbo plant to accept the offer to come on a visit to South Africa. Consequently in October 1979 the chairman of the Swedish shop stewards committee as well as an official from his union came out to South Africa. After a meeting with the Forbo-Krommenie shop stewards they met the company's management and tried to persuade them to recognise the TGWU by arguing that the EEC Code of Conduct specified that subsidiaries of multi-national corporations were required to recognise unions. (80) The visit however failed to persuade Forbo-Krommenie to recognise the union. This was partly due to the fact that the delegation was too slow in reporting back afterwards and hence no concerted follow-up action was taken by the Swedish and Dutch workers at the Forbo plants due to a loss of interest.

Thus at the end of 1979 the position at Forbo-Krommenie was still unchanged: the managing director stated that the company was acting on advice it had sought from SEIFSA and was not prepared to negotiate at two levels, namely the industrial council to which it belonged as well as the unregistered TGWU. He claimed that the company's policy was that it would be prepared to negotiate with the TGWU as soon as it registered. (81)

At the same time the union was still pursuing recognition relentlessly. Its strategy was spelled out by the organiser Gladile who was employed by the TUACC Workers' Project:

The shop stewards are supposed to always push management to recognise the union - to push management and take up some complaints inside the factories for the workers. We can't leave it to wait until registration. (82)

#### 4. TUACC Workers' Project 1978 - 1979

The General Sector of the TGWU remained an anomaly within the union. It originated from the multitude of Benefit Fund members who were either too scattered around or in inappropriate industries to organise. They were therefore in the union, but the union did not have the intention to organise them. The members of the General Sector were only provided with the most rudimentary services: only individual complaints were dealt with by the TGWU. Although the intention existed that some of the members in the General Sector would be organised when they reached a sufficient membership in their firms, the presence of the General Sector remained inconsistent with the objectives of a union.

At the same time the other unions within TUACC were faced with the problem that they could not accept many workers who wanted to join the unions because they were concentrating on a few specific factories. After considering these two problems, the TUACC Council decided in August 1978 to establish an additional organisation called the TUACC Workers' Project (TWP). The purpose of the Project was to provide limited services and benefits to all unorganised workers to whom extensive organisation could not be provided. It was left to the TGWU to consider the relationship between its General Sector and the TWP. The union decided that all General Sector members would be

transferred to the Project after consultation with each member. Gardiner Gladile and a trainee were appointed as organisers of TWP. (83)

Although the TWP did operate as a pool for unorganised workers who wished to belong to the trade union movement, it started playing an additional role soon after its formation. This role was to organise certain factories where the workers showed potential to a level where the factories could be transferred to a union. As early as October 1978 Gladile expressed his intention to concentrate on two factories in Prospecton. (84) Then, in January 1979 workers at the large Rainbow Chickens plants in Hammarsdale went on strike in demand of higher wages which won them an increase of 7 cents per hour in their wages. (85) This action on the part of Rainbow Chickens' workers made the TWP decide to try and start organising them. (86)

Rainbow Chickens in Hammarsdale consisted of three plants employing more than 1400 African workers. The largest plant was P1 that employed about 1000 workers while the P2 plant had about 300 employees. Organisation at the factory proceeded smoothly and the Project succeeded in having shop stewards elected onto the works committee in the P2 plant. Relationships between management and the workers did not however run so smoothly. In May management fired one of the shop stewards and works committee members, Virginia Ndlovu, under conditions that appeared to the workers to be a case of straight victimisation.

Workers at Rainbow Chickens wished to continue with their militant tradition and go on strike at once, but the TWP cautioned them against hasty action. It is unclear what the organisers advised the workers to do instead. Conflicting

evidence suggests that the organisers either recommended that they should prepare for a legal strike or that they should try to get the Labour Department to resolve the dispute. (87) In either case they proceeded to contact the Labour Department in Pietermaritzburg. After lengthy delays stretching over more than two months the TWP discovered that the Rainbow Chicken plants were not covered by either the Industrial Conciliation or the Black Labour Relations Regulation Act because of their agricultural nature.

Attempts were then made to arrange a work stoppage where workers would remain in the workplace and return to work only when given an ultimatum by management to do so. After careful planning the workers at plant P2 commenced on the work stoppage on 27 August in which they displayed remarkable determination on their side to have Ndlovu reinstated. For three days in succession the workers tried to implement their strategy which was to proceed to work, don their overalls, then stage a sit-in in the canteen until management had satisfactorily dealt with Ndlovu's dismissal. Their intention was to remain in the plant all the time and not to get dismissed by returning to work when management started to threaten them.

The plan however backfired when the morning shift on the 27th refused to start working when management issued them with an ultimatum. The workers then refused to leave the premises and it was only when the police was called in that they departed. The afternoon shift found themselves locked out, but when they returned to work on the 28th they also congregated in the canteen demanding the re-employment of Ndlovu. They too were fired when they refused to start working. Early in the morning of the 29th about 400 workers gathered outside the plant with the intention of adopting a similar strategy again should they be re-

employed. The police turned up in twelve armoured cars before the workers could commence their march to the factory. The workers were instructed to disperse within five minutes and when they did not do so with the necessary speed, teargas was fired and 55 workers were arrested in the ensuing police charge. The arrested workers were subsequently charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act (88) while between 150 and 200 striking workers were not re-employed.

Undeterred by this setback, the TWP continued organising at Rainbow Chickens. Two and a half months later membership of the Project stood at approximately 720 and was coming close to 50% of all the employees at the Hammarsdale plants. The biggest setback for the TWP was that all the shop stewards at P2 had been "shaken out" by the strike and the new Steering Committee was not working properly. Management had instituted a system of liaison committees, but had allegedly given an indication that it would recognise a representative union. In the light of that Gladile was intending to transfer the Rainbow Chicken members of TWP to the Sweet Food and Allied Workers' Union, the FOSATU affiliate operating in Transvaal.

The role of the TWP had thus crystallised into providing limited services to members and to start organising factories for other unions. In October 1979 the Project was organising six factories and employing three organisers. Financially it was in a strong position holding R14 000 in savings. (89) While the TWP was thus performing the tasks for which it had been created quite successfully, the TGWU was not making much headway as a trade union.

## 5. The TGWU in 1979

The TGWU was a comparatively small and weak union towards the end of 1979. The total signed up membership of the TGWU in October 1979 ranged between 700 and 800. Of these only about 100 to 150 were paid up. The acting secretary of the union considered a factory to be well organised when it reached a stage where workers were able to approach management for negotiations through the committee they had formed. Of the eight companies the union was organising he considered only Forbo-Krommenie to be well organised. At two other companies, Turnall and Sutherland Tannery, the union had firmly established its presence, while the remaining five were all at early stages of organisation or re-organisation. (90)

Union organisation at Turnall was the next most advanced after Forbo-Krommenie. Turnall manufactured asbestos products and a liaison committee existed for African workers. Because of the danger to workers' health, the union concentrated on health and safety issues. Investigations in October 1979 revealed very unhealthy working conditions. Two of the cleaning machines with swivelling sweepers blew up asbestos dust in the plant. The company also did not have a canteen for its African workers and they had to eat their lunch near the machines where there was dust. (91)

The TGWU had a membership of about 275 at Turnall, but had not yet elected a shop stewards committee. Only a steering committee existed in the factory. Although it did have one or two strong leaders, some of its members were not really committed to the union's struggles. Consequently the committee was not operating effectively. (92) This did not deter the union from launching a recognition campaign at Turnall.

This was part of the strategy mentioned in the previous

chapter on the CWIU in which three FOSATU unions in Natal planned to launch simultaneous recognition campaigns at three companies under common ownership. The CWIU also proceeded with recognition while MAWU decided in the end to hold back because their organisation at the plant was not sufficiently advanced. One of the Turnall organisers justified the move on the grounds that the time was ripe for the union to go ahead with the recognition campaign because the union's organisation was just peaking and workers had been prepared for the recognition campaign for some time. She maintained that they would feel let down if the union did not go ahead with the campaign before the end of year recess in 1979. (93) As a result an approach was made to Turnall management in the middle of November 1979. As was the case with the CWIU, the TGWU was thus making a premature bid for recognition.

A serious problem confronting the TGWU was that it lacked dynamic and competent organisers. To compound the problem they put a new and inexperienced organiser in charge of organising Sutherland Tanneries in Pietermaritzburg where the union had about 200 members as well as a shop stewards committee. At a meeting of the committee on 8 November 1979 the organiser made a number of fundamental errors. When workers brought up problems, the organiser would immediately come up with a response without first finding out some of the most basic information necessary to make any kind of useful intervention. In particular he failed to perceive the potential for mobilising workers on issues raised by the shop stewards. So, for instance, the organiser decided that a lawyer had to write a letter to the company about dissatisfaction with the company's policy on overalls, an issue that concerned all the workers in the factory. He also kept on

referring issues raised by the shop stewards for decision to higher authorities in FOSATU thereby removing the participation of shop stewards and other members in issues that affected them directly. (94)

The BEC of the TGWU appeared to experience difficulties. In October 1978 it was reported at a TUACC Secretariat meeting that the TGWU BEC 'was full of conflict' and that some members failed to attend its meetings. It was arranged that BEC members from other unions would try to assist the TGWU BEC. (95) A year later the BEC was still not functioning smoothly and was at loggerheads with the Forbo-Krommenie shop stewards committee, the most advanced committee in the union. The BEC had unilaterally decided that the organisers of Forbo-Krommenie were to be replaced by other organisers without first consulting the shop stewards committee. The shop stewards rejected the decision of the BEC and informed it that they were intending to attend the next BEC meeting to present their case. (96)

The best organisational achievement of the TGWU towards the end of 1979 was at Forbo-Krommenie. The union had a very high and involved membership at the factory and the shop stewards committee was impressive with about four strong members taking the lead. The committee had planned their actions on the shop floor with great skill in order to achieve as much impact as possible without jeopardizing their own positions in the factory. (97)

Other than Forbo-Krommenie, the TGWU's organisational achievements by the end of 1979 were not impressive. It was a remarkably small union considering the length of time it had been in existence. Some, but not all, of its lack of performance could be ascribed to the conflicts Thizi Khumalo generated during 1976 and 1977. Although the diverse type of factories being

organised made it more difficult for the union to get off the ground, a major factor was that the officials and organisers in the union were incompetent without sufficient initiative and imagination to build it into a strong and vital organisation.

## Chapter 7

### Power, Democracy, Education and Politics in FOSATU Natal

The preceding four chapters have provided detailed accounts of the four unions in TUACC in Natal that became affiliates of FOSATU in 1979. The aims of this chapter are, firstly, to fuse the analysis of the unions together by presenting an overview of the organisational history of TUACC and FOSATU in Natal. The overview helps to clarify themes the unions had in common as well as the differences between them. It also provides an opportunity to add additional aspects of the history of the movement as a whole. Secondly, the chapter aims to analyse the strategies to enhance the power of the unions and efforts to democratise them. The role that the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) played in this regard is also investigated. Thirdly, the chapter considers the approach that the trade union movement adopted towards political organisations by examining its policy towards the KwaZulu government and Inkatha.

#### 1. Organisational History of FOSATU (Natal) Unions 1973 - 1979

Since each union in TUACC and FOSATU (Natal) faced its own unique situation and had its own experiences, its history differed from those of the others. Nevertheless the organisational development of all the unions can broadly be classified into three stages during the period under consideration. This is because these stages were in part determined by external forces such as the degree of militancy of the African workers in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, the economic recession commencing in 1976, as well as the political turmoil of the same year and subsequent state repression. But the stages

were also related to developments inside the unions and co-ordinating bodies which interacted with each other.

The three stages in the unions' history were firstly the period of mass membership from 1973 to about 1974, but with some momentum carried over into 1975, secondly a stage of declining membership from about 1975 to 1976 giving rise to a change in organisational strategy of the unions, and thirdly a stage of reconstruction and consolidation of the unions by conducting intensive recognition campaigns at a small number of multinational companies from 1977 to 1979. The periodisation does not fit each union neatly, but does manage to portray the general trend in the unions.

#### Stage 1. Mass Membership 1973 - 1974/5

The first stage in the history of the unions was characterised by a mass membership of the Benefit Fund and unions. This followed in the wake of the 1973 strikes in Durban and, to a lesser extent, in Pietermaritzburg. Worker militancy and consciousness were high and workers streamed into Bolton Hall, the trade union centre, to join and pay their subscriptions to the Benefit Fund and unions. Workers' militancy was refuelled by the fresh wave of strikes that broke out in the textile industry in Durban in January 1974.

The state took its first serious step in repressing the burgeoning trade union movement by banning four of the White intellectuals in the movement, namely David Hemson, Halton Cheadle, David Davis and Jeanette Cunningham-Brown, shortly after the January 1974 strikes. In spite of the blow this administered to union organisation membership continued growing rapidly in all the unions and the Benefit Fund. In June 1974



organisation. These were linked to a dispute between intellectuals within the movement at that time. One side, argued most strongly by Hemson, favoured the mass organisation of all workers while the other side wanted selective in-depth organisation of workers inside the factories. The critique was spelled out by the latter group under the pseudonym 'Black Ex-Trade-Unionist':

Both the phenomenal growth (and admittedly a paper growth), and my experience of the recruiting situation at a Pinetown factory, lead me to believe that the workers are press-ganged into joining these unions. Perhaps that is being harsh because workers do want to belong to unions ... They are willing to be press-ganged, but they know not into what. The union membership form is usually accompanied by a list of benefits and that is all...

Organisational work is done almost exclusively outside the gates before and after work ... The central man in the union becomes the 'organiser' who collects the subscriptions, takes down the complaints, runs the union administration, negotiates with management, etc. This line of thinking ends in bureaucracy, because the staff of the union begin to develop their own interests at the expense of the workers. (3)

The critique included a class-based analysis of the reasons why the unions were adopting such organisational methods.

The 'white' students who started the unions at Bolton Hall, are neither black nor working class. Their counterpart, the black students in BAWU, are not of the working class. Both groups approach the black working class from the 'outside'. The structure of the unions that they have set up symptomatically mirrors this.

The point which I am trying to make is that these unions were deliberately created by people outside the working class, and this has influenced the way in which these unions have been organised. (4)

Although the criticisms of the organisational method of the unions was valid, the analysis was misdirected in that intellectuals in the movement were subsequently instrumental in redirecting the unions' organisational strategy to shop floor participation. The analysis also did not take the prevailing high worker militancy on which the unions were capitalising into

consideration. Management were also temporarily put on the defensive by the collective worker action and prepared to make concessions they would not have made otherwise. The most significant concession was the recognition of the unregistered NUTW by Smith & Nephew after a strike by the Indian and African workers at the plant in November 1973.

Managerial defensiveness and the rapid recognition of NUTW by Smith & Nephew raised the unions' expectations unrealistically high and led them to expect rapid gains and quick recognition from companies. They accordingly rejected the strategic use of registered works and liaison committees preferring to demand union recognition directly.

However, in 1975 worker support and membership of the unions started tailing off. This happened for a number of reasons and had far-reaching implications for the unions. These are all considered next.

## Stage 2. Decline in Membership and New Organisational Strategy 1975 - 1976.

The basic cause for the decline of worker support for the unions was their inability to make headway in their struggle to advance workers' rights at the work place. This was largely due to the inadequate organisational methods adopted by the unions. Although the methods adopted by the different unions differed in detail from each other, they all made the same fundamental error of not consolidating their strength inside the factories. Once they had completed the initial stage of simply signing on membership en masse, some unions made the mistake of then placing too much reliance on the organisers to conduct the workers' struggles. MAWU also fell into the unsound habit of moving from factory to factory instead of consolidating organisation at

any one of them.

Management also recovered from the shock of the 1973 strikes and developed a counter-offensive against the unions. It consisted primarily of promoting liaison committees with the support and backing of the Department of Labour. The strategy severely hampered the advance of the African trade unions because the committees were deliberately used as an alternative to trade unions in order to deny them recognition. This further strengthened the opposition of the unions to liaison committees.

Economic conditions also put some of the unions on the defensive. The NUTW was hardest hit by a recession in the textile industry which commenced in the last quarter of 1974 due to the importation of cheap oriental textiles. Large sectors of the industry were utilising as little as 60% of plant capacity and more than 10 000 textile workers were laid off in the country as a whole. (5) In 1975 the chemical industry also experienced a recession to the detriment of the CWIU, while MAWU was adversely affected by a recession that commenced in 1976 in the metal and engineering industry resulting in retrenchments and short-time in the industry. The economic slump in these sectors of the economy thus reduced the unions' membership and weakened them.

Coupled with these circumstances and events, worker militancy in Durban and Pietermaritzburg declined as no new strike waves took place after January 1974. The loss of worker militancy meant that unions had to make real gains in winning workers' rights if they were to retain the commitment of workers.

In a survey of members of three of the unions, NUTW, MAWU and CWIU, conducted in late 1975, Eddie Webster found that the majority (59%) had joined the unions to defend their rights at the work place. It was clear that the workers wanted the unions

to improve their working conditions. Their largest problems were victimisation and arbitrary action on the part of management as well as low wages. They were, however, divided on whether the unions were helping them to overcome these problems. About one half (49%) believed that the unions were helping them while the other half either thought that the unions were not solving their problems (3%) or that it would not be fair to judge the unions' performance because they were not recognised (45%). Although the last group did not express an outright criticism of the unions, they implied that the unions were not solving their problems.

Even though there had been an initial rush into unions on the part of African workers, the survey found factors that were subsequently inhibiting other workers from joining the unions: the members surveyed considered fear of intimidation by the employers and the state as well as a basic pessimism of the unions' chances to survive as the two primary reasons why other workers were reluctant to join the unions. (6)

The survey by Webster thus showed that towards the end of 1975 members were divided in their estimation of the unions' effectiveness in winning rights for them at the work place, and that new members were probably reluctant to join because the risks involved outweighed the potential advantages of doing so. Given the loss in worker militancy, the findings of the survey therefore shed light on the reasons why worker support for the unions was dwindling.

In addition inner turmoil within TUACC disrupted the unions' organisational efforts and led to further worker disaffection with the unions. It commenced in the NUTW in 1975, spread generally, and became most intense the following year as it

carried over into 1977 in the case of the TGWU. The turmoil was basically due to two reasons: frustration at the lack of progress of the unions and resentment of what was perceived as the dominant role played by White intellectuals in the movement.

The first challenge to the dominance of White intellectuals in the unions came from organisers in the NUTW in January 1975. According to White intellectuals, the roots of the discontent came from one of the NUTW organisers who was suspected of embezzling union money. The checking of finances was in the hands of the White intellectuals and resentment built up against them on that account. Another intellectual attributed the resentment towards Whites to the policy they introduced of making organisers accountable to their members. (7) The organiser under suspicion of embezzlement looked for allies and found two Black Consciousness-oriented organisers who supported him. (8) A power struggle developed between them and the White intellectuals which resulted in the expulsion of the organisers, all three of whom had adopted a Black Consciousness position. A struggle thereupon developed between the two sides for control of the workers in the factories. Although the Black Consciousness organisers took some of their followers with them, the majority of African workers demonstrated their support for White intellectuals in the movement by remaining in the union. In this way the non-racial orientation of the movement was reinforced.

The next challenge also came from within the NUTW from an astute but relatively uneducated African organiser, Thizi Khumalo, who was regarded as a natural leader by many workers. His organisational skills were however limited and when he lost his position of dominance in his local union office he attributed it to the dominance of White intellectuals in the unions. In •

October 1975 he started campaigning against Whites in the NUTW. His activities became very disruptive as intense struggles developed between him and other organisers. Khumalo was finally moved sideways into the TGWU, but the NUTW lost a number of factories where he had been organising before.

Some of the other turmoil in TUACC and its affiliate unions were also seen in racial terms although they too had deeper underlying reasons. In 1976 conflict developed between MAWU and TUACC over the extent of autonomy that MAWU had in fund-raising from overseas bodies. MAWU wanted greater autonomy whereas TUACC was insisting that all funds had to be channelled through itself. The differences crystallised out in the person of Alpheus Mthethwa, the secretary of MAWU, who subsequently admitted that MAWU was 'falling apart at the time' (9) Mthethwa wanted to rescue the union by obtaining more money in order to employ more organisers, whereas TUACC wanted him to straighten out the organisational disarray in the union. (10) Mthethwa perceived these differences as personal conflicts between White intellectuals who wished to dominate working class leaders like himself who tried to remain independent of the intellectuals. (11) The root cause of the conflict between MAWU and TUACC was however the collapse of MAWU and the interventions of TUACC officials in attempts to sustain the union.

The turmoil within TUACC blew up at its Council meeting in May 1976. The conflict emanated from a range of officials who had either been demoted or were under threat of expulsion within the movement. (12) They made a collective and concerted effort to dislodge the established hierarchy. The opportunity to take up their struggle came when TUACC intended to establish control over the IIE and to entrench TUACC supporters in IIE posts. Two

open IIE Council meetings were held in July and August 1976 where the issues were thrashed out with much acrimony and accusations of White domination were made by the disaffected group.

The climax was reached near the end of the second IIE meeting when

After wild allegations were made by some people, Jonny [Copelyn - JM] got up to say that he thought the main problem facing the Council was one of racism. There were people who, to hide their own shortcomings, were flinging accusations to divert attention away from themselves. Magubane who was making the most outrageous statements had as a union secretary presented no financial statement to his Furniture and Timber Union in the past nine months. (13)

It was subsequently shown that there had been irregularities on the part of Magubane in managing the monies of the Furniture and Timber Workers' Union. The union collapsed and what was left of it was transferred to the TGWU. (14)

The lack of progress of the unions was also responsible for the turmoil in TUACC in another way. This was because TUACC officials, in particular the secretary, were expelling incompetent organisers from the organisation. Such a process was bound to generate conflict and to fuel the arguments of White intellectual domination in the movement. The intensity of this conflict was also heightened by the secretary's forthright manner.

Although some of the turmoil in TUACC carried over into 1977 most of it came to an end more or less at the same time the state banned no less than eight of the movement's officials in November 1976. This was the second major repressive action taken by the state against TUACC in 1976. In May Junerose Nala and Obed Zuma, two NUTW organisers, were detained for 7 months and only released in December. although all these repressive acts were setbacks for the movement, it had sufficient resources to draw on to whether the blows successfully.

In order to try and revive workers' flagging interest in the unions TUACC commenced on a Campaign to visit workers in the townships in October 1975. The Campaign had a political dimension in that its publically declared aim was to obtain signatures for a petition demanding that worker rights be granted by parliament. The purpose behind the Campaign was however to visit workers at their homes and residences and revive their interest in the unions. It was also aimed at giving shop stewards an active role in the unions by involving them in the Campaign as well.

Copelyn who was secretary of TUACC at the time, described the Campaign's effects as follows:

We were actually on a losing wicket and we'd been withdrawing all the time into small meetings forgetting half the factories we'd been involved with and concentrating on one or two. We became very isolated, I felt. The effect of that campaign was to make us reach out again to our rank and file and to make our presence felt around townships, around factories and so on... We suddenly started creating roles for shop stewards which were outside their role as a departmental representative and such like. (15)

The Campaign however failed to revive the workers' commitment and support for the unions. The high worker consciousness and militancy of the preceding two years were gone and it was necessary for the unions to engage in more fundamental reforms to adapt to the new conditions which faced them. The solution put forward by intellectuals and adopted by the movement was to continue the process started in the Campaign of putting more emphasis on the role of the shop stewards.

Although the new organisational strategy was first mooted as early as 1974 in the NUTW, it was only gradually implemented by all the unions over the next three years. It was in fact not until 1977 that all the TUACC unions consistently adopted the new strategy. The essence of the new strategy was to put primary

emphasis on organisation inside the work place by giving shop stewards a central role in the unions. The shop stewards were to be responsible for organising workers in their departments and representing them in the unions as well as in negotiations with management. They were also to become directly accountable to the union members in their departments. The collection of subscriptions would become the responsibility of shop stewards as well. The shop stewards committees would each appoint their representatives onto the unions' BECs and thus ensure a structural accountability of the BEC to the workers in each of the factories. Coupled with this the new strategy required that the unions should concentrate on organising only a few factories to allow for in-depth work place organisation. Each organiser would then be responsible for organising only two or three factories at most.

The new strategy also embraced a policy of localisation. By this was meant the opening of local offices in areas close to the work place. This was aimed at facilitating greater participation of workers in the affairs of the union. The intention was that Local Executive Committees would be elected from shop stewards of the surrounding factories thereby transcending the industrial divisions of the unions. (16) The first local office in Jacobs was opened by the NUTW around October 1974. This was followed with an office in Pinetown in August 1975. Although Local Executive Committees did come into existence over the years, the initial expectations from them were probably too high. Each of the unions retained their autonomy and the functions of the 'Locals' became one of co-ordinating the use of resources and events in the local offices. As such they made good sense in the decentralisation and sharing of the

unions' resources.

Another aspect of the unions' organisational strategy that also changed during this period, was their policy towards works and liaison committees. Instead of rejecting them out of hand, the unions evaluated whether they could not make strategic use of the committees in order to establish an organisational base inside the factory. In 1976 the CWIU made it a policy to first form a registered works committee before approaching management for union recognition. The strategic use of statutory works and liaison committees continued into the third stage of union organisation until management developed a new counter-offensive.

### Stage 3. Consolidation and Recognition Campaigns 1977 - 1979

As mentioned above the TUACC unions only started implementing the new organisational strategy consistently in 1977. For the first time they all adopted the same method of concentrating on in-depth organisation at a very limited number of factories. However, their strategy went beyond the one originally envisaged. The unions' primary aim was to gain recognition from management. To effect this intensive recognition campaigns were launched at a few carefully selected factories. The companies were chosen to ensure that they were subsidiaries of multinational corporations. This enabled the unions to utilise international leverage in support of their recognition campaigns.

Support was sought and gained from unions in Britain and Europe organising in the parent companies to put pressure on them in order to compel their South African subsidiaries to recognise the unregistered Black unions. In some cases shop stewards from Britain and Sweden were brought out to South Africa in order to

familiarise themselves with the situation and try to make their solidarity action more effective.

The recognition campaigns were conducted so intensively that the unions concentrated enormous efforts on only one company each. The companies where the unions battled hardest to gain recognition were Glacier Bearings (MAWU), Henkel (CWIU) and Forbo-Krommenie (TGWU), while at Smith and Nephew the NUTW was struggling to renew the existing recognition agreement. Other companies were however also being organised with strong worker support and with considerable effort being put into gaining recognition.

However, in spite of conducting intensive recognition campaigns the unions were not successful in gaining recognition at a single one of the companies by the end of 1979. The only exception was Smith & Nephew where the NUTW succeeded, after a hard struggle, in renewing the Agreement already in existence. At the other companies the unions were only engaged in discussions about recognition, not negotiating the terms of recognition.

The lack of success on the part of the unions was largely due to management's resolute opposition to them. Management adopted a new sophisticated strategy that opportunistically out-maneuvred the unions with their almost exclusively African members. The strategy was based on management's anticipation of the Wiehahn Commission's recommendations to promote multi-racial works councils in the factories. The companies accordingly established multi-racial work place committees which were called Works Councils or some similar title. Management endeavoured to have White, Indian, Coloured and African worker representatives on the Councils and proceeded to argue that the Councils were the only representative bodies of all the workers because the unions

were only representing a section of the work force, namely the African workers. Management insisted that the unions had to seek representation through the Councils because they would not be granted separate recognition by management. Concessions were also made to workers through the Councils in order to try and enhance their standing with workers. African workers were however not taken in by these tactics and continued to demand union recognition, but to no avail.

Management often used a further argument against recognising the unions, also based on the Wiehahn Commission's recommendations. They argued that they would only recognise the unions once they were registered. In some cases management held up the unregistered status of the unions as virtually the only obstacle to granting them recognition.

The one company where these strategies were of no avail, Smith & Nephew, announced in May 1977 that it was not intending to renew its joint recognition Agreement with the TWIU and unregistered NUTW after it expired. Soon afterwards the company announced its plan to set up a non-racial Works Council. The NUTW conducted an intensive campaign against Smith & Nephew without the aid of the TWIU which had severed its links with the NUTW. After the NUTW recruited all the members who had resigned en masse from the TWIU over its decision and putting pressure on the parent company in Britain, Smith & Nephew relinquished its stand and negotiated a new Agreement with the NUTW.

As was mentioned in the second stage of the unions' history, the turmoil within the organisation carried over into 1977. Once again it developed around Thizi Khumalo who was deemed to be so disruptive by the TUACC Council that it dismissed him unconstitutionally from his post as organiser in the TGWU in

February 1977. As a result the supporters of Khumalo, who constituted a majority on the TGWU BEC, took a decision for the union to break away from TUACC. Throughout the remainder of 1977 a struggle was waged between TUACC and the Khumalo group for control of the TGWU with its considerable financial resources. It was finally won by TUACC by means of a court interdict and by gaining control of organisation in the factories.

The Khumalo group was advised in their tussle with TUACC by Harriet Bolton who had returned to the country for two years and was infuriated by the unconstitutional behaviour and 'un-trade union like stance' of TUACC. (17) Of her own accord she thereupon raised R120 000 towards the end of 1977 from the ICFTU for a multi-pronged Project. The Project aimed at setting up a Centre for Trade Union Research, an Advice Centre for unemployed workers, as well as 'collective home industries and markets for unemployed workers'. The basic objective of all these projects was to expand extensively the base of workers being organised and to take union organisation beyond the factory floor and union offices. (18) Bolton launched the fundraising for the Project without consulting TUACC or informing them of her intentions. In so doing she antagonised the leadership in TUACC even further. (19)

TUACC did however gain two representatives on the Project's Trust Committee and became increasingly influential on it. Over the next two years they gained control of the direction and focus of the Project which was called Zisizeni Basebenzi (ZB). The emphasis of the Project was placed on production and tying its activities in with the trade union movement in such a way as to give worker representatives experience in running production units. The intention underlying the project was to start developing the capacities of workers to run plants, a long term

requirement for a socialist mode of production. A small clothes production unit was started with union office-bearers serving on the controlling board of the production unit. The workers of the unit were also represented on the board which decided on production norms workers had to meet as well as the wages and related matters. FOSATU's printing press was also linked up with ZB which subsidised its production. Bolton had therefore ended up again assisting the independent trade union movement in Natal, but not exactly the way she had foreseen even though it was in part what she had envisaged.

The period ended with the start of a new era when the Government, following the Wiehahn Commission's recommendations, amended the Industrial Conciliation Act and extended the legal right to African workers to belong to registered unions. FOSATU decided that all its unregistered unions would apply for registration on certain principles, namely that they would do so non-racially and as broadly based industrial unions. (20)

Considerable debate took place inside FOSATU and its affiliated unions on the pros and cons of registration. There were two principle arguments advanced inside the organisation in favour of registration. Firstly, management in Natal had persistently used the non-registration of the unions as a major reason why for not recognising the FOSATU unions. It was thus argued in the movement that by registering this objection of management would be knocked out and the unions would therefore clear the ground for gaining recognition. Secondly, it was argued that there was a potential threat from the TUCSA unions. If either its registered unions extended their scope to cover African workers, or their unregistered parallel unions registered before the FOSATU unions did, they could exclude FOSATU unions

from many factories by means of closed shop agreements. It was therefore important for FOSATU unions to register as soon as possible in order to try and prevent such potential exclusion. This threat was actually greatest in the Witwatersrand region.

The strategy underlying FOSATU's decision to register was the objective of becoming a powerful national trade union movement across a broad range of industries. Registration was seen as a means of facilitating the strengthening of the movement that was still relatively weak at that time. Erwin expressed this at an informal staff meeting on 19 October 1979, called to discuss registration.

We know that we are weak at the moment, but other people think we are strong; so we must not do anything right now that will show them how weak we are at present.

At the end of 1979 the FOSATU unions were urgently preparing to submit their applications for registration. These activities heralded the end of the third stage in their organisational history and the beginning of a new era. After 1979 the FOSATU unions expanded rapidly and grew considerably in power, their decision to register playing a positive role in strengthening them.

The overview of the history of FOSATU in Natal contained, as a part of the exposition, a description of the strategies adopted by the unions to try and strengthen their power. The effectiveness of these strategies are evaluated next.

## 2. Strategies for Power in TUACC and FOSATU in Natal

The strategies to build up the power of the unions in TUACC and FOSATU in Natal more or less coincided with the periodisation outlined in the previous section. The strategies thus consisted of a first period of signing on mass membership into the unions

from about 1973 to 1974, a period of transition from 1975 to 1976 in which the unions gradually switched to in-depth work place organisation, and a third period from 1977 to 1979 when the unions conducted intensive recognition campaigns at subsidiaries of multinational corporations. The strategies adopted during each of these periods are analysed below.

While the unions built up their membership figures rapidly in the period of mass membership they were not strengthening the unions effectively. What was happening was graphically explained by Cheadle when he said, 'we were just going factory by factory like a wind - just blowing through them leaving them no better off'. Combined with their policy of boycotting liaison and works committees during this period they allowed management to devise an effective counter-strategy against the unions. The mass membership approach did not give the unions an organisational base on the shopfloor. Furthermore by boycotting liaison and works committees they ceded the work place to management as a terrain for organising and controlling workers. As a result the TUACC unions did not make headway in challenging the power of management on the shopfloor during the first period. The one notable exception was the recognition agreement which the NUTW gained at Smith and Nephew.

During the second period of transition to in-depth organisation with a central role being assigned to shop stewards the unions laid the foundation for building up their power base as well as for democratising the unions. In fact, the approach of TUACC was to build up the unions' power by means of shopfloor democracy. Thus power and democracy were brought in harmony with each other and made mutually reinforcing objectives of the unions.

The transition was however not a smooth and unproblematic

process and the unions actually decreased in size and strength during this period. This was due to external factors, such as economic decline in various sectors of the economy and the managerial and state counter-offensive against the unions, as well as internal factors. These were the presence of some incompetent leaders in the unions which gathered in the unions during the first period as well as turmoil in the unions as a result of frustrations and the eviction of the incompetent leaders. At the end of the second period the TUACC unions were thus no stronger than they were at the end of the first period. If anything, the unions were weaker than they had been two years earlier. The foundations had however been laid during this period for building up the power base of the unions and democratising them.

In the third period the unions adopted a strategy of organising a few companies in-depth. Each union singled out one company which was a subsidiary of a multinational corporation for an intensive recognition campaign. There were three dimensions to the recognition campaign. The first was intensive work place organisation with shop stewards playing a central role. The second was an international recognition campaign which was conducted with the assistance of a representative based in Britain. The representative was in a position to mobilise support from the unions organising in the parent companies as well as the relevant trade union centres. The third dimension was a legal strategy which attempted to use the law where it could help workers make organisational advances in the work place.

During this period the unions also switched their recognition strategy. In 1977 the policy still existed of

adopting a mixed strategy of demanding recognition as well as taking up grievances in the workplace. But the lack of recognition made grievance handling frustrating for the union precisely because management would not recognise it as the valid body which could take up workers' grievances. During the next two years the unions changed their strategy and embarked solely on a recognition drive without trying to take up grievances. Workers were thus initially mobilised only to demand recognition. Although this strategy did not bear much fruit up to 1979, it yielded a rich harvest in subsequent years as unions gained numerous recognition agreements. These agreements advanced union organisation and helped considerably in building up the unions' strength: once a basic recognition agreement which recognised the shop stewards committee had been signed, the shop stewards negotiated the grievance and other procedures. (21)

While the recognition campaigns were very well conceived and one of the best strategies for trying to increase their power, the unions did not make much headway up to the end of 1979. Once again it was only at Smith & Nephew that the NUTW was able to renew its recognition agreement. At Glacier Bearing, Henkel and Forbo-Krommenie the three other TUACC unions had failed to gain recognition. This was primarily due to the resolute opposition on the part of the companies which all used a similar counter-offensive against the unions. They all set up rival multi-racial committees in the plants which, they claimed, represented all the employees whereas the unions only represented African employees. The companies also hid behind the country's legislation by arguing that it was contrary to the government's policy to recognise unregistered unions.

Thus although the FOSATU unions in Natal had not become very powerful by the end of 1979 they had gradually evolved sound

strategies which they could build on. After the Wiehahn Commission report in 1979 and the registration of the unions they made rapid headway in gaining recognition and fortifying themselves. Furthermore the policy adopted by FOSATU allowed the unions to build up their power through democracy in the unions by concentrating on the representative role of shop stewards. The extent to which the unions were democratised thus also provide an indication of the power of the unions in the workplace. This is considered next.

### 3. Democracy in TUACC and FOSATU in the Natal Region

As the exposition of the unions and TUACC has indicated, the democratisation of the trade union movement was a gradual and difficult process. Intellectuals initially played a strong leadership role in the founding and running of TUACC as well as the other organisations. They were however committed to creating democratic structures in which the workers themselves could participate and control through their elected representatives. This section considers the extent to which this form of democracy had been established in the unions and FOSATU in the Natal region by 1979. In particular it focuses on the question whether intellectuals were still so powerful in the organisations that they were effectively controlling them or not. Linked with that is the question whether intellectuals were facilitating or obstructing the process of democratisation in the unions.

The form of democracy that the intellectuals in TUACC strove to establish was explained by Alec Erwin who became secretary of TUACC in 1977 and, subsequently, the first general secretary of FOSATU.

It seems to me there are, broadly speaking, two conceptions of democracy. One I would style a radical-liberal conception which is that everyone must have his say and be allowed to vote. And within those people someone must be a leader. I think that kind of democracy is actually open to disguised power manipulation and control because every man speaking will not change basic structures or institutions in society. We'd say you must have resilient structures that can hold people accountable in a real sense.

So the alternate conception of democracy is a much more structured view: that people must be able to control what is possible to control. We must establish more definite structures of accountability. So what we were trying to build in TUACC, and are presently trying to achieve in FOSATU, is that the democratic structure must be through a process of the factory controlling the shop steward because that man the worker sees every day in the plant, his access to him is far greater. Then the shop steward sits on the BEC and the report back system is structured and definite. If I could contrast this, say, to a BEC that's elected at an AGM. There is no clear structure of systematic accountability there. So we've been trying in TUACC to build that structure up from shop steward to BEC to TUACC.

Now that is a very much slower process because structures in themselves never create democracy. Only aware leadership and membership create democracy. So once having built shop stewards you then have to make them effective shop stewards. If they are effective their membership is going to be more informed, conscious and interested in knowing what they are doing. And likewise good shop stewards will make a good BEC, and a good BEC a good National Executive Committee. (22)

Erwin's evaluation of the extent to which intellectuals in TUACC had succeeded in creating democratic trade unions by 1979 flowed from the form of democracy they were pursuing.

Now it does mean that the conceivers of democratic structures, the intellectual leadership, will be more dominant in the initial period. While there is no doubt that a few of us have been very important and dominant and we pushed and bulldozed to some extent, I think that the practices and lines we've established are democratic and resilient.

I think we built up BEC executives and shop stewards who can decide for themselves, who are effective in their own plants. The more successful they are the more that leadership will become powerful and effective. Now working on that conception of democracy it will take more time.

I would say in TUACC whilst we [the intellectuals -JM] might be powerful there's no possibility that we could

massively abuse the power structures. It's just because certain ethics have been established which cannot be broken at this point no matter how dominant the intellectual might be. We have more resilient checks against our power than whatever had been achieved by the liberal-democratic conception of democracy. I don't deny that we might have a lot of power and influence, but equally it's nonsense to say that workers must just democratically rise up.

To my mind the one thing that the TUACC experience did create is its conception that workers' control as an ethic is crucial and that the BEC is more important than the organiser. I do believe we've got that. We haven't as yet got a capacity for the BEC to effectively dominate the organiser, but the ethic that it should do is firmly implanted and not challengeable. So I think an organiser can't step too far outside that. If he does he's gone. (23)

In evaluating whether FOSATU in the Natal region had attained the form and level of democracy spelled out by Erwin it is necessary to examine historically the problems the movement experienced in the democratisation of its institutions.

#### Problems in Creating Democratic Structures and Practices

When the initial institutions that eventually constituted TUACC were founded in 1972 and 1973, the intellectuals, mainly White, were firmly in control of them. This applied to the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund (GFWBF), the Central Administration Services (CAS), as well as the early unions such as MAWU and the NUTW. Although these institutions arose in response to the upsurge in worker militancy and former SACTU trade unionists were involved, the actual creation of the institutions, the development of their structures and the formulation of their policies and strategies were firmly in the hands of the intellectuals.

While the intellectuals who were involved in the initial formation of the trade union movement did not all hold exactly the same ideological views, most of them were committed to progressive trade unionism that had the goal of creating a

democratic socialist society. This entailed the establishment of democratic and non-racial trade unions. Initially these principles were fairly abstract and unformulated, but as they gained experience with the growth and development of the organisations, the intellectuals clarified and concretised their concepts and objectives. (24) Non-racialism in trade unions meant that the unions were to be open in membership to all workers regardless of colour. In practice it meant that predominantly Africans would constitute the mass membership of the unions while Africans, Whites and Indians would be officials of the unions.

Because of the intellectuals' commitment to trade union democracy all the early organisations with the exception of CAS were created with the intention of enabling workers' control to emerge. They were all formally structured to allow for control by the workers' elected representatives. Their executive committees were brought into life as soon as a sufficient level of organisation had been achieved. The elected representatives were however not competent to assume immediate control of the organisations without gaining experience and receiving training first. As a result the executive committees were initially firmly in the hands of the intellectuals who directed and steered their affairs. They often explained the constitution and the tasks of the office-bearers to the elected worker representatives. (25)

The most telling example of this took place at the first BEC meeting of the Durban branch of MAWU held on 10 November 1973. The meeting was directed by David Davis from the Wages Commission of the University of Natal. He first explained the structure and function of the BEC to the elected worker representatives

from three plants. Then, when it came to the election of a chairman

Mrs Shabalala proposed Mr Shange for the position. He explained that he felt he was not educated enough for the position. Mr Davis explained that there was a difference between education gained at school and the wisdom gained through experience in everyday life. He stated that the qualities needed by the chairman were wisdom, loyalty to the working class movement and the trust of the workers. It was evident that Mr Shange possessed all these. After this Mr Shange agreed to stand for the position. (26)

This situation prevailed for a considerable period. Even as late as June 1975 when the TGWU was founded, Mike Murphy had conceptualised the structure of the union and explained the role of the Shop Stewards Council to the representatives. (27) In the same month the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC) was reconstituted as the controlling and co-ordinating body of the unions and organisations affiliated to it. Once again it was an intellectual, John Copelyn, who explained its role under the new constitution at the first meeting of the full Secretariat. (28)

While a number of social reasons could be advanced for the initial dominance of White intellectuals in the administrative control of the unions and TUACC, a structural reason was the educational deprivation of workers. In a survey of members of three of the TUACC unions at the end of 1975 it was found that one-sixth of the workers had received no education whatsoever, almost half had been to school for a maximum period of 5 years, and two-thirds had received only primary school education. (29) With such a lack of education plus the fact that workers were in jobs requiring no or hardly any skills, (30) it followed that workers did not have the capacity to take command of the unions.

It would be wrong to conclude on the basis of the social inequality between White intellectuals and African workers that

the workers were ignorant of the issues involved and that they passively allowed themselves to be manipulated by White intellectuals. In the same survey many workers knew of SACTU's brand of trade unionism and its experience of state repression. In fact, 11% of the respondents had been SACTU members in the 1950s and 1960s. An informal leadership also existed in the factories which discussed the wisdom of re-establishing trade unions. (31) The intellectuals thus found themselves learning from African workers who took the lead when it came to factory organisation. Furthermore those intellectuals who did not listen to workers lost their credibility with the workers. (32)

The commitment of the intellectuals in the movement to democracy led them to construct TUACC in such a manner that workers' control was formally built into the organisation. TUACC consisted of a Council and Secretariat: the Council was composed of the full Branch Executive Committees (BECs) of the unions affiliated to it and two representatives from interested parties such as the Institute for Industrial Education. The Secretariat consisted of two representatives nominated by each affiliated union, only one of which could be a paid official of the union, as well as one representative from each affiliated interested party. The principle of worker representative majorities was thus built into both the TUACC Council and Secretariat. Furthermore, only trade union delegates had voting rights on the Council and Secretariat. (33)

However, even though the formal structures ensured democratic worker control of TUACC, it was very difficult to put into practice. It literally took years before worker representatives who were kept accountable to their constituencies developed a meaningful say in TUACC. In practice union officials, usually the secretaries, constituted the majority of

members attending the meetings. The problem was most pronounced in the first two years of the Secretariat's existence: although statistics do not render a qualitative description of the influence of different members on the Secretariat, seven organisers and two BEC members attended the meetings on average in the period up to April 1976. Thus there were usually three times as many union organisers as worker representatives present. Occasionally there was no or only one representative present. (34) This was partly due to the difficulty they experienced as workers in attending meetings. Since the full Council only met quarterly while the Secretariat met every fortnight, it meant however that the running of TUACC and the common concerns of its affiliated unions was effectively in the hands of the union officials represented on TUACC.

A further problem was to ensure the representativeness of the TUACC members. Already at the first meeting of the TUACC Secretariat under its new constitution in June 1975 concern was expressed about the danger that members of the Secretariat may not represent the interests of their constituents at the meetings. They were therefore encouraged to report back to their BECs and union or local staff meetings. Furthermore they were also urged that

since they did not come as individuals they were only entitled to put forward the arguments of their union, not their own point of view. (35)

This however turned out to be a vain hope. At a Secretariat meeting eight months later Copelyn, the secretary, noted that

because of the very inadequate reporting of the Secretaries to their BEC's it was decided that BEC representatives from each union should sit on TUACC. He said that TUACC was the only body where strategies, policies, etc, were discussed on a broader base and it was important that the BEC representatives were involved in this discussion. (36)

Attendance of worker representatives improved as a result of this meeting: between April 1976 and October 1978 there were on average five BEC members at Secretariat meetings as opposed to two representatives who attended on average before. (37) This still did not resolve the problem of selective and sectarian representation by the members attending the Secretariat meetings. Three years later in 1979 the regional secretary noted that

the functioning of the Secretariat remains a matter of concern. There is a need for all members of the Secretariat to improve the extent to which they express the position of those they represent rather than simply their own viewpoint. (38)

By that stage one of the unions, MAWU, had taken steps to overcome the problem. The MAWU BEC submitted specific resolutions to the Secretariat rather than leaving it up to the MAWU representatives to put forward the union's position. The regional secretary proposed that other unions should follow suit as a way of overcoming the lack of representativeness on the Secretariat. Shortly after that FOSATU was founded and the TUACC Secretariat was replaced by the Natal Regional Executive Committee. Although it had the same structure as its predecessor, it was no longer the key policy-making body in the Federation as it was superseded by the FOSATU Central Committee. The Regional Executive Committee thus played a more administrative and less policy-oriented role than the TUACC Secretariat. The significance of representativeness thus declined somewhat. This was further reduced by the precedent set by the MAWU BEC to the other unions in the Federation.

The creation of democratic structures and practices in TUACC by no means followed a smooth upward progression. There was, in fact, considerable turmoil within TUACC and some of its affiliated unions in 1976. In June 1976 the TUACC Secretariat decided to establish sub-committees to investigate certain areas.

To an outside observer at that time who was himself a trade unionist, this appeared to be a backward step in terms of promoting democracy. Gavin Anderson was a MAWU organiser in Transvaal who attended meetings with fellow organisers in Durban in July 1976. He subsequently commented that

What we identified was a proliferation of sub-committees of various sorts which explored various areas completely and only then would report back to the major decision-making bodies. (39)

On the other hand he perceived that decision-making was highly centralised in TUACC:

The thing that held all the unions together was the TUACC Council and Secretariat which was a body of about seven people. What we saw was the only place in which all the issues were discussed was the Secretariat. It became logical that only the Secretariat would be able to have all the knowledge of the organisation to control it and ensure its smooth running. In fact the workers would never be able to discuss fully any issue. They would always be presented with very logical arguments why this particular course should be followed, or else with a fait accompli which they would have to get used to. (40)

As a result he perceived considerable in-fighting taking place at the personal level in TUACC.

There were all these bitter wrangles going on and it seemed that worker principles had been forgotten quite largely and there was just this struggle for survival by some and for control by others. (41)

Not only was policy-making highly centralised according to Anderson, but it was also forced onto the unions. He maintained that this was not democratic:

What was argued was that you must work out clearly where you are going and then push it through at all levels. Well, we didn't see that consistent with internally democratic unions. (42)

The criticisms of TUACC by Anderson need to be placed in context. Firstly, Anderson's own self-confessed 'workerist' position in favour of 'massive discussion around each issue by all the workers' would have coloured his perceptions of events in

Durban. (43) Secondly, he gave an exaggerated impression of the number of sub-committees that existed and did not observe that issues raised at the TUACC Secretariat meetings were also discussed at union BEC meetings. (44) Thirdly, the organisation was going through a very difficult phase in its history due to the fact that the unions were generally not making progress in the factories, but were in fact losing members. This generated considerable frustration on the part of the organisers who vented their pent-up anger on each other.

The drastic step of removing incompetent organisers was also taking place. The secretary of TUACC was leading a lobby of people who were intent on removing incompetent organisers from the unions. He subsequently explained this by pointing to limitations he perceived in the ability of workers to control their organisers in practice.

The thing is that I do not believe in worker control of unions in regard to matters which they are unable to control. For example, if you look at the job of an organiser, it involves in part certain activities around the factory. Because of that fact workers are able to see whether the person is doing the work or not. Accordingly, as soon as that is the case, then they are in principle capable of controlling that organiser. But if you take other organisational work such as office work, dealing with complaints and stuff like that from workers who come from factories which have no representation whatsoever on the executive committee, then I see no significance in the question of workers' control over those organisers because they can't control them.

I feel that is the area where one ought to jack people up from the position of a full-time employee of the movement. And I was quite prepared to take the role in regard to people who were just so patently bad, but had managed to find little niches for themselves which didn't actually involve them with any organised worker. (45)

Anderson thus perceived the turmoil generated by these events, but his criticisms did not take sufficient cognizance of the challenges that were facing TUACC and its affiliated unions in 1976. He was correct in perceiving certain powerful

organisers struggling to flush out some incompetent organisers. This was not always done democratically, but with the purpose of building up the organisational strength of the unions, another objective of the unions. Two of the objectives of the unions, democracy and power, were thus not always compatible with each other and forced the unions to promote one objective at the expense of the other.

The following year TUACC emerged with a clear sense of direction and commenced with the reconstruction of the unions by concentrating on in-depth organisation and recognition campaigns at very few factories. However, the struggle for control of the TGWU between the Thizi Khumalo group and TUACC played itself out during 1977. This highlighted another issue observed by Anderson, namely whether individual unions in TUACC had not lost their freedom and autonomy by belonging to a tight-knit co-ordinating body that centralised policy-making.

Constitutionally it would not appear to be the case because of the equal representation of each of the unions on the Council and the fact that decisions were reached democratically by majority votes. However, it did mean that a dissenting union would be tied by a majority vote on any issue. As a solitary voice on the Council the union would have difficulty persuading the other unions to change their position. Furthermore, TUACC provided the infrastructure and financial resources necessary for the union to operate, thereby creating a dependency of the union on TUACC that would have been hard to break.

It therefore was the case that individual unions did relinquish a degree of their freedom and autonomy by affiliating to TUACC. But this loss of freedom was offset by the strengthening of the unions through their membership to TUACC and

later FOSATU. Small and weak unions were built up and protected by the Council. By forging common policies each of the unions was fortified by the collective strength of all the unions in an over-arching body. The loss of individual freedom of the unions thus helped them build up greater power individually and collectively.

#### Extent of Democracy in FOSATU in the Natal Region 1979

An aspect of Erwin's exposition on democracy in FOSATU in Natal that has not yet been addressed is the extent to which the unions themselves had succeeded in establishing workers' control by 1979. Late in that year the BECs of the former TUACC unions operating in FOSATU (Natal) demonstrated an uneven development. The NUTW was the one union where the BEC unmistakably held the union officials accountable to them. The union also had well-established shop stewards committees at four companies, particularly Frametex. The other three were at Smith and Nephew, South African Fabrics, and Consolidated Woolwashing and Processing Mills. MAWU was another union where the BEC had been stabilised although it was still relatively new after the collapse of the union at the end of 1976. The BEC however was not very widely based. It rested on the representatives from Glacier Bearings in Pinetown and Scottish Cables and Multi-Metals in Pietermaritzburg. The CWIU had shop stewards at only two plants, Henkel and Revertex, and these two plants were the only ones that had elected representatives on the BEC. Other factories were sending observers to its meetings and the BEC had therefore not yet become a stable executive body of the union. Similarly the TGWU had only one well-organised factory, Forbo-Krommenie, but the union's BEC still appeared to be under the

sway of the acting secretary of the union. It was also not in harmony with the Forbo-Krommenie shop stewards committee which represented its members forcefully.

Thus at the end of 1979 FOSATU (Natal) had BECs that were sufficiently developed to ensure accountability of their own representatives and control of the organisers in only two of the four former TUACC unions. At the remaining two unions the BECs were not yet sufficiently representative and stable to ensure such accountability and control.

The level in the unions where democracy had been established most firmly was the shopfloor. Shop stewards were actively taking up shopfloor issues in their departments and were kept accountable to the workers in their departments. Besides the daily contact shop stewards had with their members at work, accountability was also ensured at union meetings. Union offices in Jacobs, Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg were hives of activities in the evenings during weekdays due to the fact that shop stewards as well as active union members from each plant met frequently - usually on a weekly basis. At such meetings the shop stewards and the organisers were kept accountable by reporting on what they had achieved over the past week. On the basis of their experiences new strategies would be formulated for the following week when a similar meeting would be held again. Every few months weekend training and organising seminars was held for each of the factories. On such occasions fairly large numbers of more advanced and promising workers usually attended the seminars where more intensive training and strategising took place.

The overall conclusion to be drawn from the historical and empirical survey of the achievements of TUACC and, later, FOSATU in the Natal region, thus confirms Erwin's contention, but with

qualifications. Each of the unions had a small number of soundly organised shop stewards committees. Resilient BECs that had a measure of accountability and that could effectively curtail the power of officials also existed in pockets of TUACC and FOSATU in Natal, but not as a general phenomenon.

Erwin also tended to assume too readily that the correct structures and aware leadership and membership would create trade union democracy. These conditions were however not sufficient since an essential requirement of democracy in the hierarchical structures created by TUACC and FOSATU was to ensure accountability of the representatives at each level of the hierarchy. Thus shop stewards had to be accountable to their members on the shopfloor, the BEC members, who were elected from the shop stewards, had to be accountable to the shop stewards, and the members of the TUACC Secretariat (later the FOSATU Regional Executive Committee) had to be accountable to the constituent unions' BECs.

While there was democratic workers' control of shop stewards on the shopfloor higher levels of organisation were less representative with the least accountable level being the executive of TUACC. For the first two years of its existence under the new constitution the Secretariat of TUACC was in effect not accountable to the BECs of the unions. This was mainly due to the fact that worker representatives from the unions were hardly represented on the Secretariat. Once their attendance had improved an additional problem was the lack of representativeness of the BEC members who tended to act as individuals rather than representatives of their unions. TUACC was thus not truly representative of its constituent unions for a number of years until MAWU started developing the system of

taking resolutions passed by its BEC to TUACC meetings. The establishment of democracy in the FOSATU unions in Natal was thus not simply an event, but a process that developed gradually over time. The democratisation process was not smoothly upward, but uneven with unanticipated problems that required many years to resolve.

An important component in the emergence of worker leaders was the education and training which they received from intellectuals in the movement. The form as well as the contents of the education and training could facilitate their emergence to a greater or lesser degree. In order to examine the impact on workers of the education and training in TUACC and FOSATU in Natal it is necessary to look at its historical development.

#### 4. Worker Education and Training in TUACC and FOSATU in Natal

##### The Institute for Industrial Education (IIE)

##### Introduction

An examination of the history of worker education in TUACC inevitably requires a study of the history of the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) because of the pivotal role it played in worker education. It was founded at about the same time as the TUACC unions emerged. Although the IIE worked closely with these unions, considerable tensions and conflict arose between them.

The conflict was basically over the form of worker education which the IIE was to provide and the relationship between the IIE and the emerging trade unions. The conflict manifested itself over three issues: firstly, the question of who was to control the IIE. The issue arose whether it should be a relatively autonomous body or whether it should fall firmly under the

control of the unions. In effect it boiled down to whether intellectuals outside the unions or closely linked with the unions should control the IIE. Secondly, the contents of the education to be provided became highly contentious: it was disputed whether it was to be aimed at the broad upliftment of the Black community as a whole or whether it should be closely tied to the organisational needs of the trade unions. Out of this arose the third issue: which workers were to be educated? Should the courses of the IIE be open to all workers or should they be limited to workers from the TUACC unions only?

This section examines these three issues in an historical context. In particular it focusses on the roles of intellectuals in these bodies because the conflict was really fought out between them with workers playing a passive role.

#### Origins and Structure of the IIE 1973

The roots of the IIE, as those of the unions, lay in the Durban strikes of 1973. The strikes revealed a need for workers' education. At the Inaugural Meeting of the IIE on 30 May 1973 Harriet Bolton explained how the members of the Central Administration Services (CAS) came to perceive the need to establish an institute to cater exclusively for the education of workers:

during the strikes the trade unions and other interested bodies were appalled by the lack of knowledge displayed by the workers, the employers and the general public, about the rights of workers. While the employers and the general public could easily remedy their lack of knowledge by making use of the educational facilities at their disposal, the same does not apply to the workers. The workers have neither the time, nor the money, nor access to these facilities. (46)

CAS carefully structured the IIE to fit into the prevailing conditions facing them. Effective control of the IIE was vested in the hands of a relatively small Working Committee although an

elaborate umbrella body was created as a protective shield. The Working Committee was dominated by a few individuals including Harriet Bolton, Foszia Fisher, Halton Cheadle and David Hemson. Fisher was particularly active in the formation of the IIE and was subsequently elected the first chairperson of the Working Committee. (47) She received considerable support from her husband, Richard Turner, a political science lecturer who was banned in February 1973. Although she acted autonomously and was in no way dominated by Turner, they discussed IIE matters together to the point where Fisher became protective of an idea thinking of it 'as our idea and wanting to protect something that I thought was Rick and mine'. (48)

The umbrella body of the IIE consisted of its own Council as well as an Academic Advisory Panel. The Council, which had very limited powers, consisted of representatives from worker organisations as well as people and institutions who could make constructive contributions to the IIE or potentially shield it from state repression. These included the Chancellor of the IIE who was Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, two other representatives from the Kwazulu Government, one from the South African Institute of Race Relations, and two from the Academic Advisory Panel. The Panel consisted of academics from the University of Natal in Durban who were to play an advisory role in the preparation of teaching material. Considerable efforts were initially made to retain the goodwill and involvement of TUCSA, but TUCSA rapidly turned against the IIE. (49) The IIE also registered under the Correspondence College Act of 1956 as a protective measure. (50) Like the trade unions, the IIE was operating in a hostile political environment.

In its early stages, the Council went through rather

elaborate procedures to launch the IIE, but it did not do much more than endorse the decisions already taken by the founders and the Working Committee of the IIE. They decided that the IIE would offer a Diploma in Industrial Relations in 1974 as a correspondence course.

The founders of the IIE also planned to produce a 'newsletter which was to report on general problems of the Trade Union Movement in South Africa and elsewhere.' The 'newsletter' was called the South African Labour Bulletin and was published at intervals of seven to eight weeks. The policy of the Bulletin was placed in the hands of its Editorial Board which was initially composed of the entire Working Committee of the IIE. The target readership of the Bulletin was clarified by Fisher at a Working Committee meeting. She stated that it was aimed essentially at trade union officials who were in need of more detailed analysis on issues that they came across daily. The Bulletin was also peripherally aimed at academics for financial rather than educative reasons, but it was not aimed at rank and file worker readership. (51)

#### Struggle for Control of IIE 1974-1975

In 1974 the IIE commenced its education by means of a correspondence course. It enrolled a total of 139 students, virtually all of whom were African workers from Durban and Pietermaritzburg: only 9 lived in other centres. The IIE was aware of some of the drawbacks of the educational method it had adopted. To try and ensure that the written material it produced was more or less at the right level, some workers 'proofread' the first drafts of the material which were then amended in the light of their criticisms. (52)

The IIE initially operated as a relatively autonomous body

although it was linked with the trade union movement by having trade union representatives on the Working Committee as well as on the Council. It also operated from the same premises as the unions in Central Court which gave it an organic link with them. However, the tie with the unions was considerably loosened when Halton Cheadle and Dave Hemson, who were the two trade union representatives on the Working Committee, were banned in February 1974 and were not replaced on the Committee. (53) This meant that the IIE no longer had effective trade union representation nor participation of the unions' intellectuals in its activities.

This situation led to increasing dissatisfaction with the IIE on the part of intellectuals in TUACC, particularly John Copelyn and Mike Murphy, who were opposed to the existing role of the IIE.

We felt it should be union controlled, that it should be orientated exclusively towards the specific educational needs of the actual organisations we had and that the correspondence technique was pretty much irrelevant; that what was needed was to develop BEC programmes, shop steward programmes, organiser programmes, and to work on a different level. (54)

Support for this position also came from workers in the unions. As a result the TUACC Secretariat made a move in October 1974 to bring the IIE under its control. They decided that they would not elect two union representatives onto the IIE Working Committee until the TUACC Council, which existed of the Executive Committees of all the unions, had formulated 'the desired nature of relationship with the IIE'. The Secretariat wanted the IIE to become a sub-committee of TUACC because they objected to the independence of the IIE as this enabled it 'to take its own decisions and formulate its own direction'. There was also resentment on the part of TUACC with the IIE's reluctance to cooperate with it in their fundraising efforts with the British

Trade Union Council.

In agreeing with these criticisms Eddie Webster, the Academic Advisory Panel representative on the Working Committee, pointed towards a different relationship between education and organisation. He maintained that

it was vital to prevent a sharp dichotomy between education and organisation. The mistake of the IIE was that ideas were formulated by intellectuals isolated from the workers and the trade unions. Ideas were not located in practice... As a service body the IIE had to satisfy the needs of the trade unions. TUACC should provide direction, and the IIE implement it. (55)

Although some members on the Working Committee tried to prevent a polarisation between the IIE and TUACC, these attempts proved to be futile. This was largely due to the political and ideological differences between the intellectuals. At the one end thereof was Fisher supported by professor Lawrence Schlemmer, chairman of the IIE Council. This grouping placed great emphasis on the need for African workers to engage in Black community struggles. On one occasion professor Schlemmer stated that his view on the role of the IIE was that

it was conceived as an organisation concerned with social change on a broad front. More particularly it was seen as directing its effort towards the needs of leaders in the working class who were outside the unions as well as those in the unions. (56)

At the other end were the intellectuals in the TUACC Secretariat such as John Copelyn and Mike Murphy who perceived African workers' struggles as predominantly a class struggle and considered trade unions to be the most suitable vehicles through which to mobilise the African working class.

The political and ideological differences between the two sides was shown clearly at an IIE Council meeting in July 1974 when professor Schlemmer proposed that the IIE should introduce a Diploma in Community Studies. He motivated the proposal on the grounds that there was a need to train leaders in Black

communities, that a workers' organisation needed to have a leadership with knowledge of community problems and an awareness of the organisation's relationship to the community. Copelyn opposed the proposal on the grounds that it was not related to the needs of the trade unions and that priority should be given to establishing trade union structures in the factories. He felt that the IIE should be a trade union school training shop stewards and should not distance itself from the factory. (57) The issue could not be resolved at the Council, but Community Studies was in fact never taught by the IIE. The resistance from TUACC was too strong and conflict between the two sides over more fundamental issues soon overshadowed the proposal.

The first move from the TUACC intellectuals came in December 1974 when, with the support of the TUACC Secretariat and Council, they successfully increased the number of trade union representatives on the Working Committee from two to four. This considerably strengthened their voice on the Working Committee as the union representatives then constituted approximately half of the Working Committee's membership.

In addition, TUACC also succeeded in redirecting the IIE's educational focus for 1975 to conform more closely to the organisational needs of its unions. At the same time TUACC persuaded the IIE on legitimate grounds to share its financial resources with the unions. The IIE had been successful in its fundraising with the TUC on the basis of its links with the TUACC unions and was awarded a grant of R18 000 in December 1974. TUACC negotiated with the IIE to introduce an additional course exclusively for ten union organisers, eight of whom were to be appointed by the unions, and the remaining two by IIE. The ten organisers would however all be remunerated by the IIE and were

to divide their time more or less equally between organisation and education. (58)

The outcome of negotiations between intellectuals on TUACC and the IIE at the end of 1974 appeared to be a compromise that could have left both parties satisfied. The Diploma in Industrial Relations correspondence course was to continue in 1975 with priority in place given to TUACC members, while the organisers' course was specifically introduced to meet the needs of the unions. The reality however turned out differently and 1975 was a year of considerable turmoil for the IIE. This was because fundamental disagreement remained over the form of worker education the IIE was to provide: the TUACC intellectuals, supported from within the ranks of the unions, were insistent that the education had to be linked to the unions' organisational requirements and take place under the unions' control while Fisher and her supporters tenaciously clung to their goals of running a general correspondence course with some degree of relative autonomy for the IIE.

Problems were encountered with both the correspondence and the organisers' courses because neither side of the Working Committee was willing to co-operate with the other side's objectives. A total of 92 students enrolled in the correspondence course in 1975. Fifty nine of the students were TUACC union members of whom 23 were shop stewards. At the suggestion of the union representatives on the Working Committee, it was decided to run a shop stewards course that would be closely linked to the correspondence course. It was however up to the unions to get the shop stewards groups organised and it was not until mid-year before this part of the correspondence course began to operate.

The organisers course generated general dissatisfaction on

the Working Committee. (59) It was argued by Fisher that the organisers were under too great a pressure from union work to have sufficient time for theoretical studies, but it was also the case that Fisher was only willing to put work into the correspondence course.

The organisers' course was in the process of fizzling out by April when a proposal from Copelyn successfully put some life into it. He suggested that the organisers should be given a course on South African Labour History.

The motive that he had in putting forward this suggestion was his feeling that the major weakness with the organisers generally was their inability to abstract themselves from their work-a-day situation and so to attempt to understand and reflect upon the nature of the movement in which they were involved. (60)

The proposal met with general approval and a successful organisers' course on South African Labour History was run for the organisers by Eddie Webster and Luli Callinicos. This was followed up by an Industrial Sociology course that examined issues like oligarchy and bureaucratisation in trade unions. The latter course generated dissatisfaction with the TUACC intellectuals as they felt that it subsequently exacerbated tensions within the TUACC unions as discontented groups used the concepts and arguments of the course to argue that TUACC had become oligarchic.

The TUACC intellectuals continued to work through the Secretariat towards the incorporation and subordination of the IIE to TUACC. At the Secretariat meeting in July it was decided to present a memorandum to the IIE that it should become a TUACC sub-committee and that it should allocate fewer financial resources to the correspondence course. The memorandum also proposed that the South African Labour Bulletin should affiliate to TUACC as an interested party. (61)

The IIE Working Committee called a special meeting to consider the TUACC memorandum, but did not come to a definite conclusion. (62) The memorandum was raised at an IIE Council meeting a week later on 10 August where it was discussed from many sides. From the unions' side it was stated that 'the crux of the problem remained that of linking education to union organisation.' Fisher maintained that the Industrial Relations correspondence course was aimed at providing

general education and to train the union organisers in how to best make use of the information for their shop steward groups.

But the unionists saw little merit in the IIE running open correspondence courses that could even include Black personnel managers when there was a real need to build up and train shop stewards.

Fisher presented the basis of the dispute as seen from her perspective as follows:

On the Working Committee, the union representatives are wanting the IIE to spend less time on the Industrial Relations Course, maybe to do away with it altogether. But this course ... has been the basis for IIE's existence. (63)

The Council meeting was also inconclusive, but matters were finally brought to a head at the next Working Committee meeting when it was decided to take a vote on the issue. They voted by five votes to two in favour of the TUACC recommendation that the IIE should link its education to the organisational needs of the unions and that the correspondence course be given a secondary status. Fisher expressed a strong desire to carry on running the correspondence course, but her position had become incongruent with the reorientation of the IIE. She was pressurised into resigning and stepped down as chairperson in October 1975. Other than assisting in the final preparation

and production of IIE Handbooks, she and her supporters took no further part in the educational activities of the IIE. (64)

#### The South African Labour Bulletin: Autonomy Increased

By contrast the South African Labour Bulletin had gradually increased its relative autonomy not only with regards to TUACC, but also with respect to the IIE. The process by which it happened was through step by step changes as the Bulletin's Editorial Board responded to new situations facing them. As early as July 1974 it was decided that not all members of the Working Committee would serve on the Editorial Board, but only those who were actually involved and contributed to the Bulletin. This was because people were being held accountable for what appeared in the Bulletin even though they had no say in the matter whatsoever. A separation was thus made between the Editorial Board of the Labour Bulletin and the Working Committee of the IIE. At the subsequent IIE Council meeting it was explained that this gave the Labour Bulletin more freedom. This differentiation between the two bodies entitled the Editorial Board to formulate its own policy: at a subsequent Working Committee meeting a controversial article which was due to appear in the Bulletin was discussed. The question was raised whether or not decisions of the Labour Bulletin's editorial policy could be taken at an IIE Working Committee meeting. After discussion it was agreed that the Working Committee could not take policy decisions and the matter was left to the Editorial Board. (65)

A further step towards the autonomy of the Labour Bulletin took place when the Working Committee agreed to delegate to the Editorial Board the right to co-opt members to the Board who were not officially linked to the IIE. The IIE Council also granted the Board the right to open an account in the South African

Labour Bulletin's name. The reason for the changes was that the Editorial Board had perceived the need to expand to a national level. The Editorial Board accordingly finalised a constitution in December 1975 to operate autonomously with editors from three major industrial centres. (66) Because of the growing self-reliance of the Labour Bulletin it was not subsumed under TUACC as was the IIE. It nevertheless continued to co-operate closely with TUACC as officials of the Secretariat carried on serving as Editorial Board members for a number of years.

#### Demise of IIE 1976 - 1977

Early in 1976 the IIE effectively became a sub-committee of TUACC after the resignation of Fisher. Alec Erwin became chairperson of the Working Committee and Copelyn full time trade union education officer of the IIE. He was assisted by Mbu Dlamini. (67) Their major activity was to design and run organisers' programmes. The courses were aimed at improving the organisers' abilities to analyse their factories, to know the laws that were applicable and to provide the organisers with a wider and deeper understanding of the political economy of their society. They ran a number of courses for organisers with the direct participation of Erwin as well.

However, when two of the NUTW organisers, Nala and Zuma, were detained in May 1976, Copelyn started assisting the union in Pinetown. At the same time he and Dlamini also assumed some responsibility for organising the CWIU which was in a state of collapse. As a result of such pressing organisational demands Copelyn came to the conclusion that

to be involved with the IIE was a luxury. There was just too much organisational work to do to be able to sit back and design programmes. (68)

The same pressures operated on Dlamini who was drawn into the CWIU as a full-time official in mid-1976. (69) In addition the TUACC unions faced serious organisational problems in 1976 due to the deteriorating economy, a managerial and state counter-offensive and internal schisms. Consequently the IIE's educational programmes were severely curtailed and failed to carry on successfully. Another factor that accounted for the demise of the IIE was the federation talks that TUACC entered into in March 1977. It became clear to TUACC representatives that the IIE would have to cease having a separate institutional existence.

Because of these developments the IIE started losing its educational role. Due to the earlier efforts of Fisher and its link with the unions, the IIE had been highly successful in fundraising overseas. In the first half of 1975 it raised R9335 and in 1976 no less than R30 693. (70) The IIE was therefore able to fund other projects within TUACC, but in the process it had lost the key educational role that its founders had envisaged for it.

#### Worker Education, Power and Democracy in the Unions

With the demise of the IIE the intellectuals in the unions and TUACC themselves assumed responsibility for education and training. The only educational efforts that were working well were the weekend residential seminars. (71) The seminars were primarily geared to training workers to deal with organisational issues they faced in the factories because it was perceived to be the primary needs of the unions at that time. Although this did not deal with global politics, the training was still political through the challenge worker organisation presented to managerial control of production.

The only formal education on the political economy and related matters at the end of 1979 consisted of a fortnightly meeting of shop stewards in Pietermaritzburg led by the general secretary of FOSATU, Alec Erwin. His aim was to give the shop stewards a working class analysis and perspective of the South African political economy. (72) Such training was very insufficient as it was recognised that a full time experienced education official was required in the Natal region alone. (73) This shortcoming existed in spite of the fact that education was considered to be a priority area. (74)

However formal education was not the only way in which worker leaders and organisers were being trained. For instance, worker leaders who became organisers also required education and training. They were often attached to advanced and experienced organisers because this was considered to be an extremely good method of training inexperienced organisers. (75) In addition, at local staff meetings experienced intellectuals and organisers also had the opportunity to challenge and in that way advance new organisers. (76)

In evaluating the IIE's role in worker education it has to be borne in mind that the IIE came into existence before the TUACC unions were well enough established for worker representatives to be in a position to assert effective control over the IIE and its educational programme. The two key aspects that were at stake were the form of worker education and the relationship between an educational institution and worker organisation because they determined the effectiveness of the worker education in strengthening and democratising the trade union movement.

Hence at the time of its inception the IIE fell between two

potential roles: either being an educational wing of the trade unions, or being a voluntary association with the aim of educating workers generally, but outside the trade union movement. Both tendencies were represented within the Working Committee. (77) Vacillation of the IIE between the tendencies continued up to the end of 1975 when the TUACC unions wrenched control of the IIE away from Fisher.

The TUACC unions were thereby placed in the position of moulding formal worker education more closely to their organisational and political needs at that time. However, the organisational demands placed on intellectuals in the unions during the difficult period from 1976 to 1977 were too great to enable them to devote time and energy on worker education. For this and other reasons the IIE was pushed into the background and eventually folded up. The situation thus arose that once the appropriate form of worker education and its relationship with the trade unions had been established, the intellectuals in the movement were too caught up with vital organisational demands to develop formal worker education adequately. The opportunity to advance worker leaders through education and so further strengthen and democratise the unions could thus not be fully grasped by FOSATU in Natal up to 1979.

The close proximity of KwaZulu to Durban and Pietermaritzburg meant that the trade union movement in Natal had to face up to the reality of its existence. It therefore had to take up a stance towards the KwaZulu government and Inkatha.

##### 5. Involvement with KwaZulu Government and Inkatha 1973 - 1979

The relationship of TUACC and subsequently FOSATU in Natal with the KwaZulu Government and Inkatha went through three stages from 1973 to 1979. These stages were firstly one of close co-

operation between the trade union movement and Kwazulu Government, then one of withdrawal on the part of the Kwazulu Government, and finally an indication by the National Cultural Liberation Movement, Inkatha, headed by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, that it wanted the trade union movement to affiliate to it. The first two stages were more in the nature of TUACC seeking the protective umbrella and support of the KwaZulu Government, whereas the third stage was qualitatively different. It constituted an attempt by the Black nationalist movement to bring the unions under its sphere of influence. This made it necessary for the trade union movement to formulate a policy on the formation of alliances with non-working class movements.

In 1972 KwaZulu moved into its first stage of self-government with the creation of an Executive Council and a Legislative Assembly. (78) At about the same time the independent trade union movement emerged in Durban. The newly formed unions and related organisations such as the IIE and TUACC sought to establish close ties with the KwaZulu Government. A basic reason for the incipient trade union movement seeking the support of an ethnic-based government created as part of the separate development policy was to provide the unions with a protective shield. In addition support from the Kwazulu Government strengthened the unions and workers in their negotiations with management. The unions' alliance with the KwaZulu government was therefore a strategic decision and not a principled alliance.

At such an early stage in the formation of both the union movement and the KwaZulu Government the contradictory class positions and accompanying ideologies of the organisations had not yet crystallised. A number of formal links were

consequently established between the two parties. Chief Buthelezi was made Chancellor of the IIE and no less than five KwaZulu Executive Councillors attended the inaugural meeting of the IIE. (79) In January 1974 the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC) was founded, initially with the primary purpose of liaising with the KwaZulu Government. (Int: Copelyn, Cheadle) It was intended that two representatives from each union would meet every three months with four representatives from the KwaZulu Government. (80)

From the outset the trade union movement and Black workers received very strong support in the person of Barney Dladla, the Executive Councillor of Community Affairs. Not only did he attend inaugural and general meetings of the unions and the IIE, but he also lent support in strikes at the request of the unions on the side of the workers. His most famous intervention was during the Frame strikes in January 1974 when he led 5 000 striking workers through the streets to the Frame Group's main textile mill in New Germany where he persuaded management to negotiate with the striking workers. (81)

As the trade union movement and KwaZulu Government started consolidating their positions, tensions started emerging over the supportive role of Dladla. In May 1974, at the request of TUACC, a TUACC delegation met the full KwaZulu Executive Council in Nongoma. It was resolved, although not to the satisfaction of the delegation,

that Mr. Solomon Ngobese will act as link between the workers and the KwaZulu Government. The delegates did not forget to express their appreciation for what Councillor B. I. Dladla had done for the workers and his readiness to be always at their disposal. (82)

It was probably not so wise of the TUACC delegation to single out Dladla for their gratitude. His growing support and popularity with Zulu workers constituted an alternative power

base and a threat to Buthelezi's own position. This led to disputes in the KwaZulu Assembly and as a result Dladla was moved sideways to the portfolio of Justice in June 1974. Two months later he was removed from office after further disputes. (83)

With the removal of Dladla from the Executive Council the relationship between the trade unions and the KwaZulu Government entered into its second stage. As far as it was diplomatically possible Government officials avoided contact with the unions. On the rare occasions that Ngobese did intervene in labour disputes, he appeared to do so at the request of management thereby alienating workers and unionists. (84) Concern was consequently expressed in the TUACC Council of April 1975 that insufficient contact existed between the KwaZulu Government and the union movement. (85) Numerous subsequent attempts by TUACC in 1975 to make contact with Dladla's replacement in Pietermaritzburg, Mr Khanya, however proved to be futile. (86)

The KwaZulu Government also took unkindly to the TGWU's efforts to unionise road and transport workers of the KwaZulu administration. In June 1976 notices went up in KwaZulu Government Services informing workers not to have any dealings with the unions. (87) A system akin to liaison committees was thereupon introduced by the KwaZulu Government. (88)

Finally, as a last attempt to re-engage with the KwaZulu Government TUACC drew up a memorandum that it presented to Buthelezi at an IIE certificate-awarding ceremony around August 1975. The memorandum stated that the TUACC Council believed that 'insufficient effective contact' existed between the two bodies and felt that 'your government and TUACC should work out ways and means to develop meaningful relationships'. It requested a meeting in order to obtain 'clarification of future

participation of the KwaZulu government in TUACC'. (89) This concern on the part of TUACC to maintain contact with the KwaZulu Government probably stemmed from the fact that a very large proportion of its rank and file members felt an allegiance to Buthelezi and the KwaZulu regime in addition to the fact that the KwaZulu Government could potentially support and thereby strengthen the trade unions.

However, at the IIE ceremony Buthelezi urged the trade unions to join Inkatha which had been revived in 1975. This heralded the third stage of the relationship between TUACC and political organisations based in KwaZulu. Pressure by means of further representation was put on the trade union movement to join Inkatha. This required TUACC to clarify its policy towards political organisations such as Inkatha as it stood 'on a precipice of choosing two separate directions'. (90) The movement was faced with a sensitive issue since the overwhelming majority of union members regarded Buthelezi as their political leader. In a survey conducted towards the end of 1975 amongst the members of three TUACC unions no less than 87% of the workers said that they regarded Buthelezi as their leader. (91)

Inkatha grew rapidly as a Black political movement although its membership was mostly Zulu. By September 1977 it had a paid up membership of about 120 000 with 300 branches. (92) A year later this had expanded to no less than 1 000 branches while paid up membership had increased to 150 000. (93) Only 36 of the branches were outside Natal and KwaZulu. (94) By May 1979 the organisation claimed to have a quarter of a million card-carrying members. (95)

It therefore became necessary for TUACC to develop a response that would take the potential support for Inkatha inside the trade union movement into consideration. Copelyn explained

the policy that subsequently emerged amongst the majority of officials.

TUACC developed a standpoint which was fairly widely accepted among its leadership that one should develop the organisation in such a way that it would be entirely working class based with only diplomatic relationships at this stage with any other grouping of a different class nature such as KwaZulu. Any so-called alliances that one would enter into with any of these groups would be what I'm calling diplomatic alliances in the sense that they would merely be relationships of expediency that one would go into and limit it in such a way that they would never ever exercise the slightest degree of influence on the union movement either in respect of its policies or in respect of its activity. And furthermore that one would not allow a situation to arise where we became embroiled in any form of alliance which would be difficult to break at the drop of a hat. (96)

The eruption of Inkatha in Natal and the pressure the movement initially exerted on TUACC to join Inkatha, created considerable debate inside the unions on the appropriate response towards Inkatha. The position that was reached by 1978 was that TUACC as a workers' organisation should not affiliate to Inkatha although it would not be against individual members joining. (97)

The experiences with Inkatha on the part of a respected leader in his Pietermaritzburg community who was a MAWU organiser since 1977, provide some insights into factors that influenced union members' attitudes towards Inkatha. In 1977 the organiser was elected onto the Executive of Inkatha in his residential area. At a meeting he attended in Ulundi he disagreed with a proposal from the chair, but when he wanted to raise his objection, a friend cautioned him not to because it would be unwise for him to challenge the leadership. His impression was that people were generally afraid of speaking up at Inkatha meetings and criticising the leadership. He came to the conclusion that he was promoting the interests of other classes, the 'big people' and store-keepers, by working for Inkatha. As

opposed to Inkatha, the organiser felt that members were free to speak their minds in the unions and he decided 'to work for the workers inside the factories'. He thereupon ceased to be active in Inkatha. (98)

Unanimity on Inkatha support still did not exist in the unions towards the end of 1979. Union members joined Inkatha, but opinions differed on the number that was joining. (99) Amongst the officials there was divided opinion on whether to become Inkatha members or not, but the majority, including the more influential ones, were opposed to it. (100)

The popularity and power of Inkatha continued to pose a threat to FOSATU as an independent workers' movement in Natal. This threat was reinforced when Buthelezi raised the possibility of an alliance between Inkatha and the Black trade union movement in August 1979. He described the separation of trade union interests and political interests as 'no more than a divide and rule tactic' and appealed for 'a joint effort to mobilise the people' in the struggle for liberation against oppression. (101)

The general secretary of FOSATU perceived the relationship between FOSATU and Inkatha as a difficult problem because he considered Inkatha to be a powerful populist movement on the ascendancy. He did not think that the potential threat from Inkatha could be staved off by just telling union members that it would be wrong for the unions to be allied with Inkatha. He maintained that

A far better way of doing it is to take the actual experience of your own organisation and elucidate its importance by contrasting it to Inkatha. Now that means that you can only do it in organised factories where workers can see fairly clearly that Inkatha could not do this because we had to be well-organised in the factory. Then you show that there are different interests in Inkatha and the lesson is made. The point I am making is that I think it is a slow process, but it is a problem we haven't solved yet. I think our chances against Inkatha are improving continuously and rapidly,

but there are these tight periods. (102)

The policy thus reached by FOSATU in the Natal region by 1979 regarding alliances with popular political movements was to form purely diplomatic alliances with them. This meant that alliances would only be entered into that could very easily be broken and that did not give the outside movement any control whatsoever over FOSATU. Because an alliance with Inkatha would have violated both these requirements, the organisation decided not to affiliate to it.

### Part 3

#### Transvaal

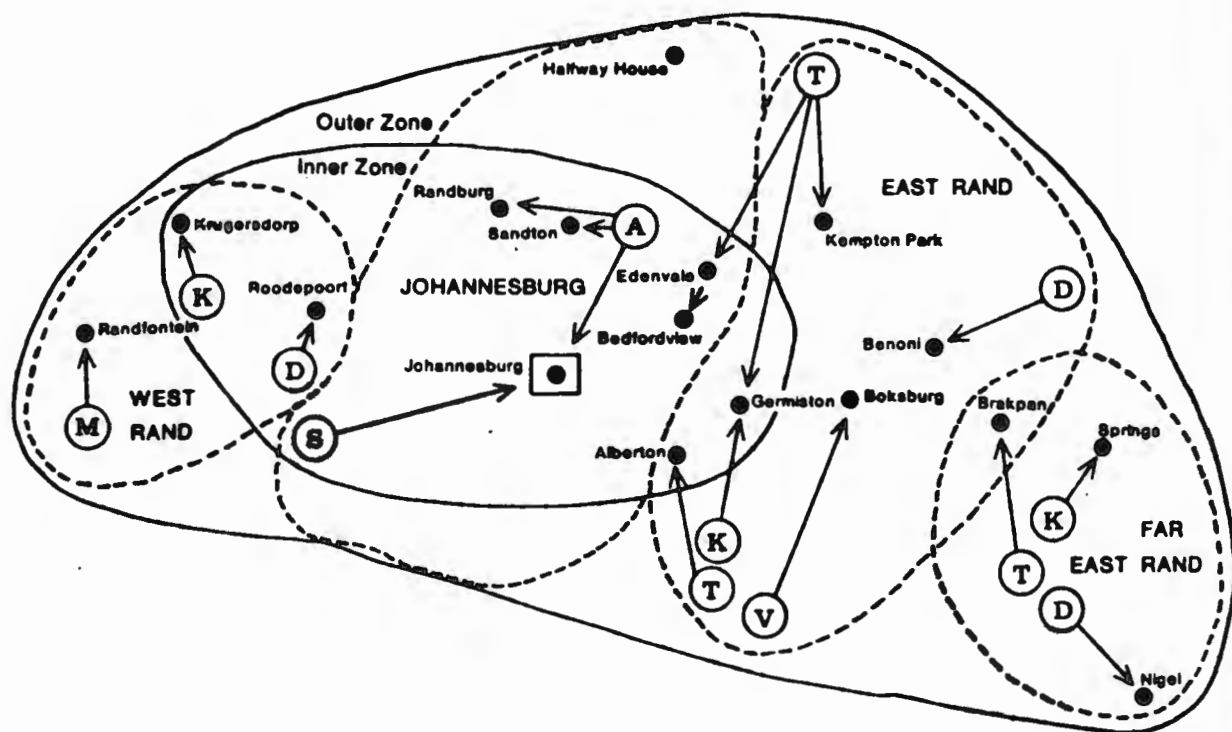
##### The Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) Metropolitan Region

Part Three examines the emergence, struggles and development of two groups of independent unions, the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions and FOSATU, in the PWV region. The characteristics and experiences of the two groups was, to some extent, shaped by the environment in which they operated. A few of the factors that were relevant to the form and nature of the unions are provided as background before the unions themselves are analysed.

One of the most striking features of the PWV metropolitan region is its immense size. From Pretoria in the north to Sasolburg in the south it stretches for 130 kilometres, and from Randfontein in the west to Springs in the east it spans 86 kilometres. Within the metropolitan region there is a conglomeration of urban and industrial areas around identifiable sub-regions. The sub-regions can be divided into Pretoria, the Vaal Triangle, Johannesburg, and the West and East Rand. The East Rand comprises a considerably larger geographic area with more extensive industrial development than the West Rand. Because of this a further subdivision is sometimes made between the East Rand and Far East Rand.

A significant aspect of the geographic characteristics of the PWV region is that the African labour force is residentially distributed in numerous townships spread across the region. On the Witwatersrand townships dispersed round the area provided the labour force for different industrial regions.

Figure 1



African Townships

Johannesburg

- S Soweto
- A Alexandra

West Rand

- M Mohlakeng
- K Kagiso
- D Dobsonville

East Rand

- T Tembisa
- D Daveyton
- V Vosloorus
- T Tokoza
- K Katlehong

Far East Rand

- K Kwa Thema
- T Tsakane
- D Dudusa

The Witwatersrand: Systems of Movement, 1972

Source: Urban and Regional Research Unit,  
University of the Witwatersrand,  
Johannesburg, June 1973

Figure 1 indicates, for instance, that Soweto supplied the Johannesburg region with labour, Katlehong the Germiston region, while Kwa Thema serviced the Springs region, and so on.

Some trade union activists in the region are of the opinion that the African labour force in the East Rand townships is more clearly working class with a greater working class consciousness than in Soweto. This they ascribe to the fact that Soweto has a larger petty-bourgeois component than the East Rand townships and because a large proportion of the Soweto labour force is employed in white collar jobs in Johannesburg as opposed to the factory work performed by East Rand workers. Table 1 lends support to this contention.

TABLE 1  
African Employment by Economic Sector, 1970

Sector	Area(1)					
	Johannesburg		East Rand		Far East Rand	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary						
Agriculture	3 750	1,0	6 290	3,0	3 600	4,5
Mining	16 220	4,2	24 490	11,8	26 000	32,6
Total	19 970	5,2	30 780	14,8	29 600	37,1
Secondary						
Manufacturing	97 300	25,4	85 680	41,2	18 680	23,4
Construction	22 030	5,8	12 940	6,2	3 110	3,9
Other	3 460	0,9	2 390	1,2	550	0,7
Total	122 790	32,1	101 010	48,6	22 340	28,0
Tertiary						
Commerce	76 290	19,9	17 830	8,6	6 780	8,5
Transport	12 760	3,3	8 420	4,1	3 280	4,1
Services	151 250	39,5	49 650	23,9	17 820	22,3
Total	240 300	62,7	75 900	36,6	27 880	34,9
Total	383 060	100,0	207 690	100,0	79 820	100,0

Note

(1) Johannesburg area comprises the Johannesburg magisterial district and the municipalities of Edenvale and Bedfordview; East Rand area comprises the magisterial districts of Alberton, Benoni, Boksburg, Brakpan, Germiston and Kempton Park, less the municipalities of Edenvale and Bedfordview; Far East Rand area comprises the magisterial districts of Brakpan and Springs, and the municipality of Nigel.

Source: Urban and Regional Research Unit, University of the Witwatersrand(1973), The Witwatersrand, Second Report, Part One, The Economy, Tables 28, 30 and 31.

In 1970 the tertiary sector in Johannesburg employed a far greater number of Africans and had a much bigger proportion of its African labour force in the tertiary sector than did the East Rand. Although a large number of employees in the tertiary sector in Soweto were women engaged in domestic service, the tertiary sector comprised 63% of the Sowetan labour force, whereas it only ranged between 35% and 37% in the East Rand and Far East Rand. Furthermore, even though the absolute level of employment in manufacturing in Soweto exceeded the level in the East Rand, it only comprised 25% of the employment in Soweto whereas it made up 41% of employment in the East Rand. It is interesting to note that it was only in the Far East Rand where mining was the largest sector employing 33% of the labour force in its area.

The major areas in the PWV region where the unions analysed in the thesis organised were in Johannesburg and the East Rand with some organisation taking place in the other sub-regions as well. While the unions concentrated on industries in the manufacturing sector, some also organised transport and commercial workers. Significantly, no union attempted in the 1970s to organise mine workers.

The next three chapters examine the historical development of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions and FOSATU in this region of the Transvaal.

## Chapter 8

## The Urban Training Project (UTP) and the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions 1971 to 1979

## 1. Introduction

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the Urban Training Project (UTP), the trade unions that it helped to create and serviced over the period 1971 to 1979, and with the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions that emerged from these unions. The period can be divided into two phases. The first phase from 1971 to 1976 can be characterised as one of progress in which the UTP helped to revive three African trade unions and to establish seven new ones. This phase came to an end when the state banned three UTP officials, two of whom were playing key roles in the organisation. The bannings were preceded by a protracted two months strike by one of the unions which was lost as well as the Soweto uprising which severely disrupted trade union organisation on the Witwatersrand. These and other factors contributed to a declining phase the UTP entered in 1977 when conflict erupted within and between some of the unions it serviced. The turmoil came to an end in the first half of 1979 when two of the unions split: the East Rand sections of the unions thereupon left the UTP to join the newly formed Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). The UTP withdrew its services from two further unions which also joined FOSATU in 1979.

This chapter commences by presenting an overview of how the UTP created a viable trade union movement during the first phase by examining the origin, aims and activities of the UTP. The activities included the establishment of unions, the provision of education and training, as well as giving financial and administrative support to the unions. This chapter also traces

the emergence of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions which consisted primarily of unions serviced by the UTP and was the forerunner of the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA).

The next chapter analyses the UTP-serviced unions. The history of the unions from the time they were founded or revived in the early 1970s up to the second half of 1979 is presented. Important industrial conflicts the unions entered into up to this period, as well as the organisation and practices of the unions as they were in 1979 are also examined.

The material provided in the detailed analysis of the individual unions is drawn together in the final section of chapter 9. The two broad themes pursued in this thesis are examined, namely the extent to which the unions had established democratic structures and practices and how effectively their organisational methods had been in building up their strength.

## 2. Establishment and Role of UTP 1971-1979

### 2.1 Origin of UTP

There are several roots that can be traced in the origin of the UTP - TUCSA's lack of commitment to organising African workers, moral and financial support from within the Anglican Church, and the involvement of the Young Christian Workers (YCW) with African workers on the East Rand. All of these roots converged in two persons who played a key role in founding the UTP, Eric Tyacke and Loet Douwes Dekker.

In addition there were external factors that influenced the organisational form the UTP adopted as well as the nature of its initial activities. These were the remorseless repression of SACTU by the state in the early 1960s and the consequent fear of trade unionism this generated amongst African workers.

In 1968 Loet Douwes Dekker, assistant general secretary of

TUCSA, and Eric Tyacke, who was in charge of organising African workers and held the post of administrative officer of the African Affairs Department of TUCSA until its dissolution in 1966, were both dismissed by TUCSA. Officially the reason was the financial crisis of TUCSA because of the disaffiliation of fourteen unions from it as a result of government censure because it organised Africans. (1) However the real reason was their strong commitment to organising African workers. Douwes Dekker, as secretary of the Committee for Unorganised Workers of the African Affairs Department, had sent round a circular to the TUCSA unions asking what they were doing to implement TUCSA resolutions about organising African workers. The unions found these questions embarrassing and resented them. The circular was also used by the Minister of Labour to attack TUCSA for organising African workers. (2) Tyacke subsequently refused an instruction from the general secretary of TUCSA to put pressure on the Engineering and Allied Workers' Union, an African union he had a hand in establishing, to disaffiliate from TUCSA. (3)

In addition TUCSA amended its constitution in 1969 so as to exclude African trade unions. As a result the Engineering and Allied Workers' Union (EAWU) was expelled from TUCSA. In the same year, Jane Banded (later Hlongwane) who had been a typist/clerk in the African Affairs Department, was appointed secretary of the union in order to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of the union's general secretary, James Bokwe Mafuna. (4)

Douwes Dekker, Tyacke and Banded kept in touch with each other. There was an increased demand on Tyacke and, to a lesser extent, Douwes Dekker, to advise African workers what trade unions were about and so, with Banded, they formulated the idea

of establishing a service organisation.

The Dean of the Anglican Cathedral of Johannesburg, Reverend Gonville French-Beytagh, was sympathetic to their cause. Through him the Superior of the Community of Resurrection decided to support their project financially. In view of the existing political climate, the project 'as it was outlined was very cautious and safe'. (5) It was called the Urban Training Project (UTP).

The UTP was run by an executive committee that consisted of staff members of the organisation as well as ex-officio members. The executive committee members were self-appointed. Until their banning in November 1976 Douwes Dekker and Tyacke were on the committee. Hlongwane also retained a regular position on it. Leonard (Skakes) Sikhakhane, general secretary of one of the UTP-serviced unions, came onto the committee in 1976. Usually two White ex-officio members, one a legal advisor, the other with religious affiliation, were also appointed onto the committee. (6)

After being founded in 1971, the UTP did not have a constituency of African workers except for the unions it was in contact with. But then, through the YCW on the East Rand, it started making contact with a number of African workers in the region. The UTP gradually started building up training courses and seminars over the weekend which were mainly for unorganised workers. It also produced calenders that made workers aware of their rights and before long found itself promoting workers' committees. Before examining these the aims of the UTP are considered.

## 2.2 Aims of UTP

In view of the repressive climate it was operating in, the initial aims of the UTP were carefully formulated. It specified only that its objective was to educate workers, not to organise them into unions. The original document spelling out the organisation's aims in 1971, stated that its aim was

To provide training for WORKERS so that they are better able to cope with work and neighbourhood problems...(7)

The method through which this was to be attained was

The provision of training programmes which will ... help workers to gain an elementary knowledge of Industrial legislation and, ... help workers to gain better knowledge of trade unions, works committees and credit co-operative methods of work. (8)

By 1973, only two years later, after the UTP had assisted in the revival of two African unions and the Durban strikes early in the same year had given an impetus to African trade unionism around the country, the UTP openly stated that its aim was to unionise African workers.

On the first page of its 1973 Annual Report the UTP openly declared that it aimed

-to assist in the development of independent trade unions amongst all workers of Southern Africa...

and committed itself to representative trade unionism:

These objects are best achieved when workers, through their elected leaders, participate with employers on an equal basis in the decision-making processes affecting their wages and working conditions.

It described itself as a workers' project designed as an advisory, educational, organisational and administrative service to workers and their organisations, striving primarily to assist the Black worker. In spite of providing all these services, the UTP did not want to become a trade union co-ordinating body and was intent not to control any trade unions.

It also committed itself to African leadership within the unions even though Douwes Dekker and Tyacke, both Whites, were

actively involved in the UTP. They were influenced by the emerging black consciousness thinking of the time, as Douwes Dekker explained:

We were not concerned ourselves to take up positions in the Black unions. This was the beginning stages of black consciousness and black power. There was the Message to the People of South Africa from the Council of Churches, and it became clear it was not our responsibility to take prominent positions in unions.  
(9)

From the outset the UTP was also determined not to become involved with political organisations in order to try and avoid state repression and so ensure its survival. It drew these conclusions from the experiences of SACTU in the 1960s. This policy was explained to all UTP staff before they were employed.  
(10)

As a result of this policy it found itself in a dilemma very early in its history over Drake Koka whom it had employed as an educator. Koka was also the secretary of the Sales and Allied Workers' Association. In December 1971 he was elected chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the newly founded Black People's Convention (BPC), an overtly political organisation. (11) The UTP, which was running out of funds at that stage, thereupon decided not to continue employing him on the grounds that it did not have the money to do so and because Koka decided to remain on the BPC's Ad Hoc Committee. (12) Koka subsequently, in August 1972, became the Secretary-General of the Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU), a black consciousness oriented general union which incorporated the Sales and Allied Workers' Association, but he was banned only seven months later. (13) After Koka's dismissal the UTP amended its constitution so that UTP staff could not hold official positions on political organisations, but were free to be members of such organisations. (14)

### 2.3 Activities of the UTP: Unions, Education, Administration

The activities of the UTP can be divided into three major areas:

- it lent assistance to and revived existing African trade unions as well as helping African workers to start new ones;
- it ran educational courses for trade unionists; although the bulk of the courses and seminars was usually conducted for African workers in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) region, they were conducted for African workers in Durban as well as Port Elizabeth and Cape Town;
- it provided financial and infrastructural resources for trade unions.

#### Establishing Unions

The unions that the UTP helped to re-establish were the following. When the UTP was founded EAWU, which was operating as an independent African trade union, linked up with the UTP. UTP furthermore helped to re-establish two other African unions. Eric Tyacke was branch secretary of the National Union of Laundry, Cleaning and Dyeing Workers (which consisted of Coloured members) and was in touch with members of the old African Laundry Workers' Union. Their leaders approached and asked him to re-establish the union. As a result the Laundry, Dry Cleaning and Dyeing Workers' Association was founded in June 1972. In addition Thelma de Klerk, secretary of the registered Chemical Workers' Union, was approached by the UTP to help re-establish the old African Chemical Workers Union. She gave assistance and by 1973 the South African Chemical Workers Union was operating.

(15)

The UTP also encouraged and assisted African workers to form their own trade unions. As a result of a Putco bus drivers'

strike in June 1972 the Drivers' Action Committee, on the advice of their legal representative, approached the UTP on how to form a union. The Transport and Allied Workers' was subsequently formed in February 1973. Furthermore Hester Cornelius, secretary of the registered Sweet Workers' Union, was asked by the UTP to assist in establishing an African sweet union. Through its education seminars the UTP already had contact with workers in the food industry who wanted a union. As a result the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union was founded in February 1974 with Leonard (Skakes) Sikhakhane as the general secretary. In May of the same year a Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union was founded at the request of workers in the paper industry. At the request of the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers, a UTP organiser in Durban, Michael Faya, became the national secretary in 1974 of the United Automobile Rubber and Allied Workers' Union (UAW) which he helped in setting up. (16) In the following year two trade unions were set up in the Glass and Building industries as a result of contact with workers from those industries through the education seminars. Ray Altman, general secretary of the National Union of Distributive Workers, and Morris Kagan also approached the UTP for assistance in setting up an African union. As a result the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) was established in November 1975. (17)

Thus by the end of 1975 the UTP had links with EAWU, revived two African trade unions and helped to establish seven new African unions. These unions developed a life and dynamic of their own under the guidance of the UTP. One of the ways in which the the UTP provided this guidance to union members was through annual Workers' Calenders.

The Workers' Calenders were large mural calenders with annotated illustrations. They had themes that reflected the changing policy of the UTP towards the unions as they developed and became more self-sufficient. The Calenders were distributed to workers in large numbers and were in popular demand. From 1974 to 1976 the number of Workers' Calenders printed and distributed annually ranged between 20 000 and 25 000.

In 1972 the theme of the Workers' Calender was Industrial Laws, reflecting the basic educational level at which the UTP was operating. In 1973 and 1974 the Calenders focussed on factory based committees of workers, but on two quite distinct forms of committees: the 1973 Calender's theme was 'Workers' Committees' which were quite distinct from statutory works committees. (18) Tyacke explained the distinction as follows:

We had felt that in the circumstances of the Black trade unions the Black shop steward was underground; he couldn't operate above ground in most cases and he would really be a contact man between the workers and the union office. If there was any problem at work he would be the one that would bring the problem and then the office would try and solve the problem which is a very unsatisfactory way of working. It is not really a trade union way of doing things, but it had to work that way in that particular circumstance.

The point was that we felt that one of the problems that the shop steward faced was the problem of isolation and aloneness in the factory and we were expecting a heck of a lot from a guy to stand up and put his head above the surface. He was sure to get it shot off in those kind of conditions and that possibly the thing to do was to go for a workers' committee in the factory where the shop steward would have this forum...

So it was merely a way of working that we felt was a better way of working than expecting individual people to stand up in an unrecognised situation, an underground situation, so we called them workers' committees. (19)

The 1974 Calendar on the other hand explained the distinction between statutory works committees and liaison committees, favouring the works committee over the liaison committee. It also pointed out the need for trade unions by

explaining that

the committee on its own falls under the control of the boss. For a committee to succeed we must see where the strength of the workers is... To give your committee strength join your union now and work for it. (20)

But it was the subsequent Workers' Calenders that stressed the importance of trade unions and provided more information about them. In 1975 the theme was 'The Value of Trade Unions', in 1976 the themes were 'Strength in Solidarity' and 'The Job of the Shop Steward', and in 1977 it contrasted 'Life Within a Union and Without a Union'. (21) In 1979 the Calendar dealt with trade union recognition - how it is attained and what a recognition agreement entails - and union organisation at the shopfloor level. (22)

The activities of the UTP and the emergent unions can however not be fitted neatly into the themes of the Calenders. Nor can all the unions be periodised together because they were often at different stages of development. However, broadly speaking, the period from 1971 to 1975 was one of founding and establishing trade unions with the majority of unions still fairly frail at the end of the period. Organisational effort was made in establishing works committees in factories with some cases of victimisation of union members resulting. Some of the unions were already established by the end of that period, especially the Engineering union which embarked on a recognition drive with a number of companies in 1975. During 1975 and 1976 greater self-reliance of the unions was encouraged.

Nineteen seventy six was a year of confidence for the unions as well as the UTP and represented a peak in the period up to 1979. Organisation concentrated on township meetings after factory contact had been made with workers. The combined signed up membership of all the unions serviced by the UTP was in the

vicinity of 21 000. (23) The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions, which all the UTP-serviced unions belonged to and about which more is said below, also started playing a more prominent role about this time. With the encouragement of UTP many of the unions embarked on recognition campaigns although they were not successful. Workers themselves showed greater militancy and at Armourplate they commenced an eight week legal strike in September that was finally lost. In November three members of the UTP staff, two of whom were playing key roles in the organisation, were banned.

Partly as a result of the bannings, but also because of the June 1976 uprising in Soweto and the economic slump that commenced in the same year, most of the unions serviced by the UTP went into a period of decline until 1979. Conflict also started to emerge in 1977 within and between some of the unions. This further exacerbated the problems experienced by the unions. The end result of this inner conflict was the weakening of some of the unions and of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions.

In order to contextualise these events it is necessary to describe the other major activities of the UTP and to examine the relationship between it and the Consultative Committee first.

#### Education and Training

The education of union members and officials was one of the central activities of the UTP. Originally the seminars were mainly for unorganised African workers who were made aware of trade unions and encouraged to form them. Once workers had established unions, the unions played a large part in determining the contents of the courses. This process has been explained by Henry Chipeya who had been a UTP and union official:

UTP, through its educational and advisory work, encouraged workers in certain industries that their interest would best be represented if they formed unions. These workers therefore formed their unions on the basis of advice they received from UTP...

The educational seminars and courses of the UTP were planned and drawn up by the UTP education department and the union representatives. The requests of the unions in terms of course content reflected in most instances the organisational stage in the development of the unions. (24)

The education and training provided took three forms. There were weekend residential seminars, one day seminars and Saturday morning or afternoon seminars. They were held consistently over the years and reached a fairly large number of workers. (25)

In 1973 shop stewards and active members' courses were held 'virtually continuously on weekends.' Most of the residential weekend seminars were 'introductory dealing with workers' problems, industrial laws and trade unions.' (26)

In 1974 nine weekend seminars were held with a total attendance of 351 participants. Individual unions requested seminars to be held for them exclusively. The courses generally included industrial laws, the works committee and the union, what the union is, the role of the shop steward, and role play of meeting with an employer. From the seminars it emerged that

one of the biggest problems facing the majority of workers is lack of self confidence - particularly when facing the employer. This caused the Project to make a point of regular inclusion of role plays where workers negotiate with management. (27)

The morning or afternoon sessions had an attendance of 754 participants during 1974 in Johannesburg and the East Rand and 446 in Durban. The majority of sessions started with particular problems brought by workers. The UTP noted that

Groups coming from the union, e.g. shop stewards have generally not had a sufficient number of sessions. Part of the reason for this has been lack of proper

organisation on the part of the unions who are inclined to leave follow-up to UTP. (28)

In 1975 fifteen residential weekend seminars were held, usually at St. Peter's Conference Centre, Hammanskraal, and were attended by a total of 387 participants. The courses focussed mainly on role play, grievance procedures and union recognition, and also included industrial laws, the need for a union and the job of shop stewards.

The Saturday morning or afternoon courses held at the UTP offices were attended by 658 participants in Johannesburg and the East Rand and 229 in Durban during 1975.

In 1976 the weekend seminars had a total attendance of 386 while another 263 attended one day seminars. The courses concentrated on topics covered in previous years, as well as an organising drive and follow up action. One of the general seminars had no less than 148 participants from all the unions and its main purpose was to show solidarity among all the workers from different industries. (29)

During 1976 the Saturday morning or afternoon courses had a total attendance of 961. The two unions that made most use of the UTP seminars in the same year were Engineering and Sweet Food. The remaining unions attended the courses as well with the exception of CCAWUSA which did not attend any UTP courses in 1976.

The UTP placed an emphasis in its education on democratic organisation and the importance of the role of shop stewards in the unions. This is well illustrated by a Shop Steward Manual which it produced in 1976; it was a 22 page document that was aimed at providing shop stewards the basic knowledge they required to perform their tasks competently. It defined a shop steward as

the person responsible for the union in the work place. The shop steward is the link between the union members and the union office and the link between the union members and management. He or she is the key person to build union strength and solidarity. (30)

The Shop Steward Manual spelled out the tasks of the shop steward as well as the procedure for handling a worker's grievance. It also explained what a shop steward committee was and included as its responsibilities the functioning of the union in a particular firm, that it spoke for union members to management, and that it negotiated with management for improved working conditions along with union officials and/or executive members. The committee was also advised to meet at least once a month where, amongst other things, it had to

plan the regular monthly membership meeting for union members in the factory (including reports from the committee on handling of grievance, discussion of worker problems in the factory, and a talk or discussion of an educational nature). (31)

The Manual also included valuable practical advice to shop stewards on what to do with different problems and a reference section including very brief summaries of industrial laws.

The educational service that the UTP provided gave it an influential role in the life of the unions. Right from the outset, the educational programme was linked to the organisation and strategies of the unions. Education and organisation were inextricably linked together and many seminars were spent looking at the strategy the unions had to adopt in the situations they were facing with management. In such a capacity the UTP played a key role in determining the organisational approach, strategies and tactics that the unions adopted. In order to illustrate this contention numerous examples are presented below.

At times the weekend seminars concentrated very specifically on organisational problems of particular unions. A seminar for the Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU)

centered on a review of the present position of the union,... sessions on organising the workers including drawing up of maps of each factory represented, and a session planning the structure and constitution of the union. The date of the inaugural meeting was set at this seminar. The seminar proved of great assistance in getting the union off the ground. (32)

At a seminar for the Transport and Allied Workers' Union (TAWU)

Specific targets were set by participants in terms of organising and getting recognition of the union where they worked. (33)

In June 1976 a significant seminar was held on the recognition agreement and the standards required for a union before it could seek recognition. On the basis of the seminar, the nine unions present listed 25 factories where bids could be made for union recognition. (34)

A one day seminar was specifically designed to assist the Paper Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PWAU) in its organising campaign. It included a report back on targets set at a previous seminar. The Glass union also held a seminar to discuss the strike at Armourplate Safety Glass. It was attended by about eighty workers and

was conducted by the UTP. After a lengthy meeting, the workers unanimously decided that the strike should continue. (35)

In 1977 the Sweet Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAU) also held a one day seminar that was mostly attended by Unilever workers to concentrate on the union's efforts to gain recognition from the company. The seminar

encouraged the members to seek recognition and increase their determination to obtain full membership. (36)

In 1979 the UTP ran courses for general members and shop stewards for a number of unions. Besides the regular topics the courses concentrated on the enrolment of members and CCAWUSA examined the role of the trade union in the work place and the community. (37)

The education provided by the UTP was thus inextricably bound up with the internal organisation of the unions and with the unions' struggles and strategies at the workplace. The UTP therefore played a vital role through its education and training in the building up of the unions that it had helped to establish.

Besides education and training, the UTP also provided financial and infrastructural services for the unions. These are considered next.

#### Finance and Infrastructure

In the first seven years of its existence the Urban Training Project provided virtually all the resources required by the unions that it helped to establish. It was the backbone of the unions and played a central role in providing the resources required by the newly founded unions. It played this role by partly being a conduit for channelling money that was raised overseas to the unions (although some money flowed directly to the unions from the donors), but also by providing the infrastructural needs of the unions.

The first financial assistance to the UTP came from the Community of the Resurrection in 1971 and 1972. This was followed by funding from a German Catholic agency, Misereor. By 1973 three International Trade Secretariats, the Metal, Chemical and Food, were also providing financial assistance to the UTP. In addition Gossner Mission was also assisting the UTP. Total income received for the year ended February 28, 1974, was R22 972 of which R19 129 was provided by the above-mentioned agents and the remainder coming from local sources. Expenditure during the same period was only R13 736 which enabled the UTP to allocate the balance to expenditure in the following year when the expenditure of R27 382 slightly exceeded the income of R25 839.

Financial assistance was by then also forthcoming from a number of European trade union federations. These included SOSV, a Dutch Trade Union Foundation, CNV, the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions in Holland, SVEA, the Swiss Federation of Christian trade unions, and the British Trades Union Congress (TUC). (38)

The way in which the UTP initially made these financial resources available to the union was to employ staff as organisers and training assistants who would do organisational work for the new unions. In 1974 the UTP employed four such staff members who were all working as secretaries of unions and by 1975 this had increased to eight organisers and training assistants, three of whom were part of a special TUC financed organising team. The UTP also subsidised the salary of the secretary of the Laundry union in 1974 and subsidised at least four unions the following year. In addition the UTP hired offices that it made freely available to the unions at first. In 1974 five unions shared the UTP head office in 'down town' Johannesburg free of charge and the following year eight unions shared these premises. The UTP also opened regional offices in Springs, Benoni, Pretoria and Port Elizabeth. The offices were used for union meetings amongst other things. The administrative services offered to the unions included clerical assistance and book keeping. (39)

By 1975 it was felt that the unions were growing and that their executive committees were becoming stronger. As a result the unions were

gradually becoming more independent and their relationship with UTP more specifically defined. (40)

In line with this feeling it was decided that the trade unions themselves would apply to their International Trade Secretariats for financial assistance for educational programs.

The grant from the TUC for an organising campaign of five trade unions was not handled by the UTP itself. It was handled instead by a specially constituted committee on which the secretaries of the five trade unions and the UTP served. (41)

It was also decided to draw a clear distinction between UTP educational services and direct organisational assistance. This meant that UTP staff who were serving as secretaries of unions were required to resign from the UTP and that their respective unions were to employ them. A start was made with the implementation of this policy decision in 1976, but events in that and the following years, especially the banning of three of the UTP staff members in November 1976, delayed the execution thereof until 1978. (42)

During 1976 and 1977 the UTP continued being financed by mainly European trade union federations and Christian agencies including in 1977 the FNV, a federation of Dutch trade unions, the Nederduitse Herformde Kerk in Holland, and TROCAIRE, a federation of Irish trade unions. Most of the unions serviced by the UTP also received funds for their own projects from their International Trade Secretariats. In 1976 the UTP employed 14 staff members as organisers and trainers and this reduced slightly to eleven the following year. Over the same two year period the UTP hired offices in seven different centres and subsidised the salaries of officials in the Building, Glass, Laundry, Sweet Food, Paper, Transport and Chemical unions, three of which were receiving full salary subsidies. Book keeping services were also provided for these unions.

During the same period and in accordance with the intention of making the unions more self-reliant

it was decided that the UTP and the unions concerned should work on a programme whereby the unions would

become responsible for paying the salaries of the secretaries... (43)

This was not envisaged as happening overnight, but as the union incomes increased, so the union subsidies would be reduced. (44)

The activities of the UTP up to 1979 clearly indicate that it played a key role in the emergence and establishment of ten African trade unions. In the case of seven of these unions (Building, Glass, Laundry, Sweet Food, Paper, Transport and Chemical) the UTP was pivotal in their survival, growth, and development. It did, however, make a point of not becoming involved in the Executive Committee meetings of the unions nor in formulating the unions' policies.

The key role of the UTP was attained through the educational and administrative services as well as the financial and human resources made available to the unions. This role towards the newly established trade unions was one that the UTP had to play of necessity in spite of the existence of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions.

#### 2.4 Emergence of Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions

The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions emerged from the UTP-serviced unions and the African unions affiliated to TUCSA. The roots of the Consultative can be traced back to 1973 when these African unions sensed an isolation and weakness during the visit of a TUC delegation. Hence, in November 1973, officials from seven or eight African unions met and agreed to elect a Steering Committee

whose task would be to investigate the possibilities of the formation of either a co-ordinating or consultative body. (45)

The officials came from the following unions: the National

Union of Clothing Workers, the SA Bank Employees' Union, the Textile Workers' Union (Transvaal), the African Women Tobacco Workers' Union, all four of which were affiliated to TUCSA, as well as the Engineering, Chemical, Laundry and Transport unions serviced by the UTP. (46) By 1976 the remaining six UTP-serviced unions also had officials on the Committee that had become known as the Consultative Committee of Black Unions. The following year only the Clothing and Textile unions from TUCSA remained on as members of the Consultative, thereby making it a Committee composed predominantly of officials from unions serviced by the UTP.

From about 1976 onwards the Consultative Committee emerged with a more independent identity and started relating to the UTP from its own position. Up to the end of that year it was still an ad hoc body that would only meet from time to time as needs dictated and was entirely composed of secretaries from the trade unions. It dealt with matters of common interests to the members and operated only in the P-W-V region. It did not have a constitution nor did it have any organisational structures, offices or staff of its own. There was an element of black consciousness present as

the Consultative was geared to maintain its black identity and to meet any workers' organisation or federation on an equal basis to avoid domination by other race groups. (47)

In 1977, as the new federation talks that led to the eventual formation of FOSATU got under way, the role of the Consultative Committee became much more important. It became the nucleus of a countervailing group of African unions which were strongly opposed to entering the new federation. They took a decision that member unions of the Consultative Committee should not participate in the new federation. (48) As we shall

see below when considering the Paper Wood and Allied Workers' Union, the Consultative Committee was willing to take action against member unions which contravened this decision.

There was a severance between the roles the Consultative Committee and the UTP intended to play with regards to the unions and what they were actually doing. The Consultative Committee was incapable of performing one of the roles it wished to play while the UTP was forced to play a role it did not want to play. Why and how this came about is examined next.

## 2.5 UTP and the Consultative Committee

It was a declared policy of the UTP not to become a co-ordinating body of the trade unions it had helped to form. On the other hand, the functions that the UTP had to perform from the time it started establishing and reviving African trade unions were often similar to those of a co-ordinating body. It was forced to play such a role with the nascent unions and there was no way the UTP could avoid it if the unions were to survive their first fragile years of existence. The UTP thus provided the finances of the unions, organised the unions with its own staff initially, trained and educated the officials and members of the unions as they developed. In addition the UTP provided office space, clerical and book-keeping facilities for the unions. Many of these were the functions that an over-arching body of trade unions would have played. Thus a separation developed between the intentions of the institution and its existing function and role. It partly came about because the UTP had developed a sound and broad infrastructure.

The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions, on the other hand, had the initial intention of being a co-ordinating or consultative body, but did not develop the necessary

infrastructure to become a co-ordinating body. This was also in part due to the fact that, when it was founded, there was a feeling that the time was not yet appropriate to form a co-ordinating body. (49)

Up to the time under consideration the Consultative Committee remained an ad hoc body that existed exclusively of the secretaries of all the unions serviced by the UTP. Not only were the unions concerned not adequately represented on the Consultative Committee, but the ad hoc grouping also had no offices, staff, funds or any other resources of its own with which to perform a co-ordinating function. To complicate matters further, some of the Consultative Committee members were also on the staff of the UTP. In 1976 five of the Consultative unions' secretaries were on the staff of UTP although this figure fell to only two the following year. The Consultative Committee was therefore also not performing the role it wanted to play as a result of its complete lack of infrastructure.

A consequence of the distortion between the intended functions and actual roles of UTP and the Consultative, was that the UTP continued to play a dominant role in the lives of the Consultative unions up to the end of the period under consideration. It effectively acted as a co-ordinating body while the Consultative Committee unions went through a period of turmoil due to the combined effects of inner conflict within some of the unions and between the unions over the question whether to enter into the proposed Federation or not. An Advisory Committee was in fact established in 1977 which in effect made the UTP play a decisive but transitional supportive role towards the Consultative Committee unions. The Advisory Committee was the committee where the UTP (executive) committee meets with the secretaries of the different (Consultative Committee) unions'.

(50) Douwes Dekker explained the link-up as follows:

What the purpose was, was to create a body, and I think they called it the Advisory Committee, which would be able to fit into this transition period of the unions being strong enough to form their own federation and UTP still playing a reasonably dominant role. (51)

The UTP was thus providing far more than purely an educational service to the Consultative Committee unions. Another important consequence of the lack of infrastructure and organisation on the part of the Consultative Committee was that a transformation in which a co-ordinating body consisting of workers' representatives became the controlling body and the UTP became the subordinate body did not take place during the period under consideration. This was to take place the following year when the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) was established.

However both the UTP and the Consultative Committee shared a common objective in seeing the Consultative Committee unions grow into strong and democratic unions. They both desired the bargaining power of the unions and workers' control of the unions to increase. The extent to which the unions achieved these two objectives are evaluated in the remainder of this chapter. However, a detailed history of each of the unions, along with their practices and extent of organisation up to the second half of 1979 is presented first. This is done for two reasons: firstly, to ensure that a carefully considered conclusion is reached, and secondly to record the history of the struggles, setbacks and achievements of these unions in the 1970s.

## Chapter 9

### The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions

#### 1. The Unions

##### 1.1 Engineering and Allied Workers' Union (EAWU)

###### Early History

EAWU was established in Aug 1963 as the Sheet Metal Workers' Union of SA by the African Affairs Department of TUCSA. (1) Eric Tyacke was the first secretary of the union and was succeeded by James Mafuna. (2) It adopted its present name in June 1969. It was financed by the African Affairs Department which received its monies from overseas, not from TUCSA affiliates. Due to right-wing political pressure on TUCSA, it informed EAWU towards the end of 1966 that financial assistance from TUCSA for the unions would be withdrawn. This was an economic blow for the union as it struggled to survive up to the middle of 1970. It could barely afford to employ two staff members, an organiser and a typist.

In February 1969 Jane Bades (later Hlongwane), who had been the union's typist until then, was appointed secretary of the union. In the same year another blow was administered to EAWU when TUCSA, once again bowing to pressure from the right, changed its constitution to exclude African trade unions from affiliating to TUCSA. Behind the scene pressures were put on EAWU to withdraw voluntarily, but the union refused and was therefore expelled from TUCSA. A period of isolation set in for the union.

### Revival of Union 1970 - 1975

In order to raise money for the union, parties were held in different townships. Then, in desperation, EAWU applied for affiliation to and funds from the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF). It was successful on both counts and this marked a turning point in the union's history. It affiliated to the IMF in 1971 and received grants from July 1970 up to 1976. While the IMF funds helped to revive the union, education courses run by the UTP played an important part in the organisational development of the union. (3) This was especially the case at Raleigh Cycles in Springs.

As a result of contact with the UTP a meeting was convened in the canteen of Raleigh Cycles on 2 July 1973 and attended by 30 workers. At that meeting it was unanimously decided to form a works committee because of poor working conditions and because the company's 'Induna system of supervisors' control suppressed grievances.' (4) On 11 July two female workers of Raleigh Cycles distributed copies of the UTP Calender and on the same day they were dismissed by the Chief Induna who told them that it was due to a reduction of staff. On 16 July two more women were dismissed on the grounds that they had brought Calenders to work. Workers at Raleigh Cycles thereupon elected a Workers' Action Committee and, through advice from the UTP, obtained legal assistance.

On 24 July 1973 legal representation was made on behalf of the Action Committee and the dismissed workers to Raleigh Cycles to reinstate the four workers with back pay, to enable the establishment of a works committee, and to refrain from further victimisation of company workers. (5) The company refused to comply to these demands and the Action Committee, in the name of its chairman, Calvin Nkabinde, thereupon applied for a Supreme

Court interdict against the firm to prevent further victimisation. (6) On 1 August, the evening before the case was to be held, Raleigh Cycles decided to give in to the Workers' Action Committee's demands. In the settlement the company agreed to reinstate the four dismissed workers with back pay, to the establishment of a works committee, and to pay R1500 towards the Action Committee's legal costs. (7)

After the Raleigh dispute was settled Jane Banded (Hlongwane) made a statement to the 'Garment Worker' which seemed to be an invitation to the Raleigh Cycles Workers' Action Committee to join the union:

Membership of my union is open to all the workers at Raleigh Cycles. I can advise that at a number of Engineering firms the union has works committees which can play a positive role in the factory for the workers. However it is only the union which can give membership to the workers and fully represent and protect their interests. It is therefore hoped that a strong link can be established between the co-ordinating works committee at Raleigh Cycles and my Union. (8)

While the UTP courses for Raleigh Cycles workers assisted in boosting the union's membership it was the successful reinstatement of the four victimised workers that swelled its membership at the company. Subsequently a similar cycle of events took place in February 1974 at Van Leer's which also raised union membership.

During 1973 workers from Van Leer attended some UTP seminars and became members of EAWU. Management at Van Leer, without consulting the workers, registered an existing committee as a liaison committee. The union members attempted to change it to a works committee, but in the process one of the leaders with 19 years service was fired on 30 January 1974. The company ignored representation from the union and so, with the aid of UTP, action was instituted in the Supreme Court to get the worker reinstated

on the grounds that he was victimised for trying to change a liaison committee to a works committee. The company immediately agreed to settle and offered the victimised worker R1000 compensation or, alternatively, reinstatement with full back pay and contribution towards legal costs. The worker chose the latter option. (9)

Workers at Van Leer carried on striving for the establishment of a works committee and voted unanimously in favour of one at a general meeting in March 1974. This mandate was conveyed to management at the first meeting of the liaison committee and management thereupon accepted that arrangements for the election of a works committee be made. (10)

As a result of these successes union membership at Van Leer's increased during 1974 from 80 to nearly 350 out of a total African labour force of 1000. Paid-up membership of the Engineering union increased commensurately from 400 in 1972 to over 3000 in 1975 while signed up membership reached 9000 in the same year. (11)

In view of the upsurge in its membership, the union resolved at its 1974 Annual General Meeting to engage actively in obtaining recognition from companies. During 1975 this resolution was pursued as the Engineering union actively campaigned for recognition from at least 6 companies, but in all except one very small company it met with failure.

In April 1975 the works committee at Van Leer which was composed of union members presented a document, which was drawn up with the aid of UTP, to management. The document requested recognition of the Engineering union, access of its officials onto the premises, and stop order deductions for the Union's funeral scheme. All these requests were turned down by management although it was agreed to give the chairman of the

committee half a day per week to attend to committee matters. In spite of the fact that more than 50% of the African workers were unionised the union was unable to put any pressure on management to reverse its decision.

The following month the union requested a meeting with the management of Boart and Hardmetals, a subsidiary of Anglo American Corporation where the union had a membership of 92 out of a potential African labour force of 500, in order to discuss union recognition. The company turned down the request because it claimed to have a 'fully represented and democratically elected liaison committee.'

At the Springs subsidiary of Abercom where the union's membership was 112 out of approximately 400 African workers 2 union members served on the works committee. Because of that it was decided in July 1975 to request recognition of the shop steward, but management refused the request.

The union approached management at a small company, Micro Press Tool in Springs which employed 30 African workers, to allow the union to take up grievances of the workers. The company initially refused this request, but in November 1975 it agreed that the union could make representations to it over workers' grievances.

The union wrote to Highveld Steel in December 1975 asking for permission to address workers in the canteen. The union had some members, but it believed that workers would interpret permission as an approval of the union by management. However this rather delicate approach was rebuffed by management who refused permission to the union.

In the same month the Engineering union wrote to Raleigh Cycles requesting facilities and union recognition. Although

the chairman of the co-ordinating works committee was granted 6 hours per week to tend to the needs of African workers, union recognition was refused. The reason advanced was that the British Holding Company, Tube Investment had adopted a policy in 1974 that it would not recognise African trade unions because they could not register and did 'not have legal status'. (12)

Although the Engineering union embarked on a recognition drive in 1975, it did not achieve any significant success. This can in part be attributed to the fact that it did not mobilise its members to push for recognition where it had a majority basis, and in other cases it approached management prematurely before it had built up a strong membership in the company.

Nonetheless the union secretary expressed the union's ideal in building up its strength through membership while steering clear of political issues. In 1976 she wrote

The Engineering and Allied Workers' Union is an independent union. It is free from any political-party domination... Its sole aim is that of bread-and-butter politics. By finding strength in Union membership and not in political ideals, obtaining recognition from employers and channelling the needs of members, an independent structure has been created... (13)

The union's political orientation needs to be seen in the light of security police intimidation it experienced during its first few years of existence. In 1975, for instance, after the union had established regional branches, security police visited Executive members at their homes and interrogated them about union affairs. As a result three of the twelve Executive members became inactive. (14)

In 1977 the union was 'on the way' towards obtaining recognition from ASEA Electric in Pretoria, but were then held back because they were not a registered union. (15) However in 1977 the union entered into an internal conflict that absorbed a great deal of time and energy of the officials. It resulted in

a complete polarisation of the union that finally tore apart into two unions in 1979.

#### Internal Conflict in the EAWU

The first open conflict in EAWU emerged at a National Executive Committee meeting on 30 April 1977 when a dispute arose between the president of the union, Mcebisi Mqhayi, and the general secretary, Jane Hlongwane, over the organisation of a weekend seminar at Hammanskraal. The president supported a sub-committee finding that the UTP was not helpful and, instead, wanted to make use of the services of a training officer from the personnel department of Van Leer to run the seminar. The general secretary was opposed to this because the union was dealing with the UTP and argued that it should at least be incorporated into the planning of the seminar. She also maintained that training workers for management, which was done at Van Leer, was different from training workers in a union. Finally, she maintained that the union had passed a resolution that all training would be done by the UTP. (16)

Although it was subsequently a matter of contention who won the majority support of the National Executive over this issue, the Van Leer training officer was invited to run the seminar. It was alleged that the general secretary played a destructive role at the seminar. While the Executive were handing out their programme she handed out a separate programme and during the seminar she tried to attack and embarrass the training officer. She also produced a document accusing the president of acting unconstitutionally which she apparently distributed to other executive members in branches other than the East Rand branch of which the president was a member. (17)

At the following National Executive meeting on 28 May 1977

the secretary was criticised for these actions and it was felt that she should be disciplined. Differences persisted and she handed in a written resignation as general secretary of the Engineering union. However at the next meeting on 25 June she withdrew her resignation. The withdrawal was accepted subject to the condition that she be suspended from her duties as general secretary for a period of 6 months. (18)

The dispute continued and gained momentum within the union as time passed. At the Annual Conference, constitutionally held to be 'the supreme decision-making organ', on 25-26 November 1977 at Hammanskraal, the dispute flared up into conflict that polarised the union. Immediately after the president's speech, the chairman of the Central Branch, Paul Bapela who supported the general secretary, wanted to know why she had been suspended. From there the Conference 'disintegrated'. (19) In a mammoth session that lasted from 5 pm on the first day through to 3 am Mqhayi and other members of the National Executive supporting him were 'compelled to leave the meeting'. (20) Jane Hlongwane was thereupon re-instated as general secretary. However, after some sleep and 'when tempers had cooled slightly' (21) the president re-opened the issue and the activities of the secretary were 'reviewed'. (22) As a result the Annual Conference resolved to dismiss Hlongwane as general secretary, a resolution that she refused to accept as valid. At that stage the conflict between the two sides became unresolvable and carried on unabatedly through 1978.

The details of the subsequent conflict are not as important as trying to understand why it arose in the first place. Jane Hlongwane considered the main reason to be that Mqhayi and his supporters had been in favour of joining the Federation of South

African Trade Unions (FOSATU) and that she was viewed as the stumbling block by them. As a founder member of the Consultative Committee and strongly in favour of it, she was opposed to EAWU joining the Federation. This was what she felt to be the deeper underlying reason of the conflict because at one stage she thought it was a personal dispute between her and Mqhayi. When she met him privately they seemed to resolve their differences, but when he was with the Executive Committee the problems recurred. (23)

On the other hand Calvin Nkabinda, who was appointed by the National Executive first as acting general secretary in January and then as general secretary in April 1978, saw other reasons for the conflict. When he and other East Rand members were elected onto the Executive he said they wanted to get things done, but the secretary was reluctant to listen to them. (24) Hlongwane's response to this was that he was referring to the seminar that they wanted to be run by Van Leer's training officer. She maintained that there was a group of 5 National Executive members from Van Leer (including Mqhayi) who controlled the Executive.

This explanation pointed towards another significant feature of the conflict within the Engineering union. It displayed a strong regional dimension. At the time the conflict emerged the union had three branches: the Central Branch comprised Johannesburg, Germiston, Pretoria and West Rand; the East Rand Branch included Boksburg, Benoni, Brakpan, Springs, Heidelberg and Nigel; and the Vaal Branch covered Vereeniging, Vanderbijlpark and Meyerton. In the conflict the East Rand Branch supported the 'Mqhayi group', the Central Branch supported the 'Bapela group' and the Vaal Branch was split down the middle with the two offices of the rival groups right next to each other

in Vereeniging. The head office of the union was in the centre of Johannesburg and Bapela worked at ASEA in Pretoria. Van Leer was situated in the East Rand and its Branch office was in Springs. The branch offices were separated by a great distance and they would understandably have developed characteristics of their own. However, this is not enough to explain why conflict emerged between the branches.

A difference in organisational strategy appeared to exist between the East Rand and Central Branches. This was reflected by Bapela's criticism of Nkabinde. He stated that Nkabinde did not know the difference between letters to a company director and to a friend. When he wrote to a company director he would say we have so many members and we demand recognition, whereas Bapela felt that a union could not demand. (25)

After the conflict in the Engineering union had led to a complete polarisation between the two groups, a power struggle developed between them for control of the union's resources. In particular the conflict revolved around the subscriptions of the Central Branch, the union's Kombi, and the office equipment and records of the union.

On 3 June 1978 the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Central Branch was held. The AGM resolved unanimously that monies collected from subscriptions in the Central Branch would no longer be forwarded to the National Executive and that the chairman of the Branch, Paul Bapela, would open a new bank account. (26) It was alleged by the union's president that subscriptions from the Central Branch had not been paid over to the National Executive from as early as February of that year. (27)

The AGM also resolved to seize the union's Kombi and its

keys. The Kombi was taken to Bapela who refused to hand it over to the National Executive at a meeting on 25 June 1978. (28)

In the same month the National Executive purported to close the union's head office in Johannesburg and presumably moved office equipment and records to the Springs office which they declared to be the new head office. On 8 and 15 July members of the Bapela group 'invaded' the Springs and Vaal Branch offices respectively and removed records and equipment. Then, on 9 September 1978 they completely stripped the Springs office leaving nothing behind. (29)

The National Executive thereupon instituted legal proceedings to recover the assets and to restrain the 'break away group' from presenting themselves as officials of EAWU. The proceedings dragged on for about a year until the parties agreed to settle out of court in late 1979. The outcome went in favour of the 'Mqhayi group' who retained their positions in EAWU as well as its possessions. The 'Bapela group' reconstituted themselves as a new union, the Steel, Engineering and Allied Workers' Union (SEAWU). It was however not until 1981 that the final settlement was made. By this time SEAWU had already been formed. Although the finance was divided equally between the two parties, SEAWU agreed to hand in the remaining assets to EAWU which could claim legal ownership thereof. (30)

In conclusion, the dispute in EAWU that resulted in a split in the union was due to a number of reasons. The ones that have clearly been identified were a regional conflict between the different branches and a difference in organisational approach between the opposing groups. The conflict also became a power struggle for control over the union's resources, although this was more a consequence than a cause of the struggle.

Although there was no overt evidence that the conflict was

caused by the intention of the 'Mqhayi group' to join the Federation, their intention to do so could have played a role. It could have strengthened the resolve of the 'Mqhayi group' to join since the new Federation offered an alternative source of financial and other resources to the union. However, the evidence strongly suggests that the conflict in EAWU would have happened even if there were no Federation talks taking place between 1977 and 1979.

A notable characteristic of the conflict was that it was centred around the general secretary with some members of the National Executive on the one hand and other members of the National Executive, particularly the president, on the other hand. There were allegations from both sides that the other side was acting autocratically without consulting the other. For instance, the chairman of the Central Branch thought that a deeper reason for the dismissal of the general secretary was because she challenged the president for not informing her of union affairs. (31) As a result a power struggle developed between them, a struggle for control over the union's resources and for the membership of the union. This was also a feature in the conflicts that developed in the other Consultative Committee unions.

#### EAWU Structure and Practices, 1979 (32)

As the conflict in EAWU gained momentum and the union polarised into two groups, each group effectively operated as a union on its own. Thus although EAWU was still technically one union up to August 1979 it was practically operating as two unions with Jane Hlongwane as secretary of the one and Calvin Nkabinde as secretary of the other. The aim of this section is to see what the situation was in the 'Hlongwane union' in August

1979 by considering the membership, organisational practice, and policy of the union on certain issues.

Paid up membership of the union was at least 1300 of which about 50% were in the Vaal Branch, 40% in the Central Branch, and the remaining 10% in Port Elizabeth. The East Rand had remained part of the original union under Nkabinde's secretaryship. About three quarters of the members were permanent residents while the remaining quarter were contract workers. The members performed mainly unskilled work with only about 5-15% doing semi-skilled work. Monthly dues by members were R1,50. The union had also received funds from overseas. Since 1976 it had obtained R8 000 from the IMF for two organisers and education as well as R9 000 from Swedish unions.

The secretary considered a factory to be well organised when the union has about 20% of the prospective membership and management should give it a way into the factory. By that definition there were 10 factories that were deemed to be well organised, nine that were poorly organised, and another 20-30 that were in their infancy stage.

In terms of organisational strategy the union used to concentrate on approaching management, but after 1978 it changed its policy by concentrating first on obtaining membership. In practice the union aimed at achieving 15% membership before approaching management. Emphasis was also being put on membership training that would give them backing to stand up to management and acknowledge their trade union membership and commitment.

The union had five full time paid organisers who had been elected at an AGM for a period of three years. The organisers were all Africans. The secretary was not in favour of having

White organisers in the union because members would not feel free to express themselves as they would see Whites as their superiors:

Black people feel it's their thing and are doing it as they wish.

The union had a total of about 50 shop stewards who were meant to be elected annually, but this had not been followed up yet and as a result they had been elected for 'donkeys years'. They just carried on as shop stewards as long as they remained in the same factory. The most important task of shop stewards was to collect dues. They were paid 8% of the money they collected plus 20 cents for each ten members they brought into the union. Shop stewards also took complaints from workers, but did not take them up directly with management.

While it did not seem to be a standard practice in the union for shop stewards committees to meet regularly, the five shop stewards of ASEA met weekly for 15 minutes to one hour. Three of the shop stewards served on the liaison committee which met twice a month. Meetings with all the workers in the factory were held monthly in the townships. (33)

The section of the union administered by Jane Hlongwane had therefore retained a considerable component of the union's total membership except for the East Rand where it lost all the factories. The organisation of this section had also remained intact and was putting more emphasis on recruiting membership before approaching management. With the exception of ASEA the union did not appear to have built up a strong shopfloor presence where workers could make effective demands from management.

## 1.2 The Transport and Allied Workers' Union (TAWU)

### Early History

On 4 June 1972, more than 300 Black bus drivers

employed by PUTCO, the Government-subsidised transport company, were arrested during a sit-in strike in Johannesburg in protest against a wage offer of 3%. The following day 40 drivers presented themselves at John Vorster Square and asked to be locked up as well in demonstration of solidarity. (34)

The Transport and Allied Workers' Union was born out of this 'remarkable solidarity and determination' displayed by the PUTCO drivers which also won them a 33 1/3% wage increase. (35) Their Drivers' Action Committee contacted the UTP on how to form a union. Along with drivers from the Johannesburg Municipality Transport Department the PUTCO workers formally established the Transport union on 2 February 1973. (36)

Before the union was founded the Action Committee, in discussion with the UTP, decided that the PUTCO management should be informed of the decision that a union was to be established. A meeting was requested on the grounds of substantial membership support. At the meeting held in October 1972 PUTCO's management was adamant that no recognition would be given to a union on the ground that it was a third party to the relationship between workers and management. (37)

Management proceeded to adopt intimidatory tactics against the drivers as well. On 21 November 1972 the Action Committee was summoned before a director of PUTCO who informed them that the Board of PUTCO had decided to fire them and 40 other drivers unless they dropped all ideas of forming a union. (38)

Possibly as a result of the threats from management union membership grew slowly. Signed up membership stood at only 216 in September 1973 even though a union leader victimised in May for wanting to establish a works committee at Vaal Transport Company had been reinstated after court action was instituted by the union.

The first general secretary of the union was John Hofman, a

former Putco employee. (39) He was succeeded by Clement Montsho on 1 May 1975. Membership of the union had been dropping before his arrival. Even though signed up membership was around 1000, paid up membership stood at only 76. (40)

#### Drivers' Works Committee in African Bus Service (ABS)

In July 1975 the Transport union received a strong boost when contact was made in Pretoria with an existing, forceful and independent committee of drivers' from African Bus Service (ABS), a subsidiary of a British group, United Transport Holdings (UTH).

(41) The Drivers' Committee had been established as far back as 1971 and it had managed to get itself registered as a works committee in 1974. It was not making advances and felt the need to belong to a broader based organisation. (42) It first established what the union stood for and only after consulting with the membership at a meeting was it decided that ABS workers should join the union. (43)

The committee at ABS was well organised and democratically run with its power located amongst members at the work place. There was full report back by the committee to members at general meetings of all the drivers who were required to sign an attendance register. Issues being negotiated with management were referred back to the drivers. Management was opposed to the committee finding a power base amongst the members at a general meeting. Its opposition was typified by a managerial response at a meeting saying that

this constant reference back of details was unnecessary and the committee must be given the power to negotiate.  
(44)

The works committee with ten representatives, nine of which belonged to the union, also played a role in negotiating wages with management. In February 1976 the works committee sent new

wage proposals to management through the union. Management ignored the union's letter, but commenced discussions of the wage rates at a formal meeting of the works committee. The committee refused to accept management's proposals nor to sign an agreement on the wages. The assistant general manager tried to persuade two committee members to sign the agreement, but they refused to do so without the acceptance of the workers. Even when officials from the Department of Labour strongly urged the committee to sign it, the committee maintained their stand. (45)

Soon after the ABS Drivers' Committee had recommended union membership to the drivers, the union formally asked permission to enter the company's premises in September 1975. This was refused, but the union's secretary nevertheless continued to enter the premises and management failed to take action against him. (46)

The union was, at the same time, also organising two other subsidiaries of United Transport Holdings. It was organising Vaal Transport that operated in the Vereeniging area and Greyhound Buslines that operated on the West Rand. Once it had become known to UTH that the union was organising at ABS, Vaal Transport and Greyhound, the union alleged that the three subsidiaries had launched a campaign of victimisation against the union. The victimisation was however restricted to Greyhound's Westonaria depot where five out of nine union members who had signed a written request for limited union recognition late in 1975 were fired for 'flimsy excuses'. The union's attempts to discuss the issue with UTH had been ignored. (47)

The union however pursued recognition with ABS at the level of officials with vigour. In December 1975 it wrote to the managing director of the parent company about union recognition, but by late February 1976 it had received no reply. Undeterred,

the union also wrote to the general manager of ABS on 3 February 1976 about a number of issues including recognition of TAWU, but the letter was also ignored. On 2 April 1976 the union secretary, accompanied by the UTP chairman acting as an advisor, went to see the managing director of UTH. During the meeting it was put to the managing director at various times that the company should form a relationship with the union, but he evaded the question. (48)

In spite of not gaining recognition from UTH or its subsidiaries, union membership increased significantly during 1976. Signed up membership of the union increased from 1 180 in September 1975 to 2 006 in September 1976 although paid up membership remained at only 400. At ABS a total of 326 out of a potential 385 African workers had signed up by September 1976. Of these 230 were paid up members. However, at Vaal Transport with a total labour force of over 500, only 80 of the 345 signed up members were paid up by September 1976. (49)

On 15 October 1976 the union's general secretary wrote on behalf of the works committee in Pretoria to the general manager of ABS 'in connection with' recognition of the union. He included a proposed recognition agreement that had been prepared in consultation with the union's attorney. (50) The draft Agreement proposed that

the Employer recognises the Union as the chosen representative of all person employed by the Employer...

The Union through its officials (\*) and advisers shall be entitled to negotiate with the Employer on behalf of the Members on all matters relating to working conditions, pay, ..., redundancies, dismissals, grievances, disciplinary procedure and all other aspects of both employment and the work situation.

the Employers shall afford them [shop stewards - JM] reasonable opportunity to attend to Union business.

(\*) Note that the union used the word 'official' to

include full-time officials, executive committee members and shop stewards. (51)

On this occasion a reply was received the following month which politely but firmly turned down the union's request on the grounds that

the Company has, through the Works Committee, been able to build up a sound and healthy labour relationship with all its staff... (52)

The union driver members at ABS decided not to use the power they had in order to gain union recognition. This was because of the ban on meetings in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act, and the 'fear and confusion' that the banning of three UTP officials had created. (53)

But the company also had another trick up its sleeve. It sought to weaken the works committee of the drivers that had been acting as a thorn in its flesh for several years. It proceeded to establish a co-ordinating works committee which consisted of two representatives each from three different departments. The three departments were supervisors and clerks, engineering, and drivers. Although the drivers works committee represented two thirds of the labour force, it only constituted one third of the co-ordinating committee's membership. The die was cast.

When the drivers' works committee once again raised the issue of union recognition at a meeting in March 1977 management's response was that this would be discussed at the first meeting of the co-ordinating works committee in July. When the question of recognising TAWU was raised at that meeting, the co-ordinating committee accepted the views of the chairman of the committee that the company should not recognise the union as there was 'adequate and suitable communication machinery between management and employees'. Satisfaction was also expressed with the co-ordinating works committee. (54)

The formerly powerful drivers' works committee had thus been neutralised and weakened by management's strategy which was apparently devised in close collaboration with the security police. State intervention therefore also contributed to the demise of the drivers' works committee. Continual interest had in fact been shown by the police and security police in the union's activities, particularly after drivers from ABS had, with union assistance, commenced organising drivers from Bophuthatswana Transport. (55)

#### Organisation in TAWU, 1977-78

AT the end of 1977 TAWU was still organising PUTCO and had also commenced organising at a number of new companies. At PUTCO membership had dwindled: in the last quarter of 1977 there were only 20 paid up out of a total of 500 signed up members. The secretary had tried to revive the lapsed members in vain. He attributed the union's problems to the company's practice of promoting elected members of the liaison committee to inspectors. Total membership of the union at that time stood at 2735 of which 400 were paid up members. At a couple of other companies the union had managed to get works committees elected. These included Pitso Transport in Brits and Botswanagare Transport in Mabopane. (56)

After August 1977 the general secretary started organising goods delivery companies as well. It made some progress at Langhoff Transport and towards the end of the year it started organising Piet Bosman Transport in Vereeniging. In March 1978 the workers approached management in order to establish a works committee. After a battle in which the union called in the Department of Labour, the works committee was elected, but then Bosman's wanted to register it as a liaison committee. The

subsequent dispute led to the dismissal of the secretary of the works committee. The case was taken to the Supreme Court, but in an historic judgement in August 1978 the judge ruled that neither the works committee nor the unregistered Transport and Allied Workers' Union had the requisite legal standing to bring the case to court. (57)

#### Dissent in TAWU

But all was not well inside the Transport union. The first rumbling of an internal dispute came late in 1976, but only burst open in August and September, 1977. It manifested itself as a clash between the union's secretary and the president. During August a grievance of union members arose at the Farraday Depot of PUTCO. The secretary drafted a letter to management in consultation with the relevant workers. The wording of the letter was read back to workers and amended to reflect their wishes and approval. (58) The letter stated that the union was

dissatisfied with some of the irregularities, and would like to have the company's policy...

The Executive Committee of this Union is very much (sic) concerned that if you do not attend to this matter it could open up doors for some radical elements who will have no time for negotiation. We would like you to give this Union the day, when the union officials and members of this Union employed by your company could meet you to discuss these issues. (59)

On the other hand the president of the Transport union, Wilson Manana, had wanted to meet the members at the Depot first to see whether they supported the issues, but before he or the Executive Committee could do so, the letter had been written. (60) As a result the president drafted a letter to PUTCO that nullified the letter sent by the secretary. It said

I wish to inform you that I was not consulted about the above letter neither my Executive was consulted. Therefore in this circumstances I wish to ask you to rule the contents of this letter null and void. A further letter will reach you after our Executive has met soon. (61)

The secretary's account of what happened subsequently was that he felt that he could no longer work in the union because the president had a negative attitude towards him. He therefore resigned on 31 July 1978. (62)

The president's account of what happened filled in more details. He observed that in the past the secretary ran the union in his own way, but then through the educational courses the Executive Committee became aware that

we were not involved in some of the issues. The secretary was doing his own thing and telling us what is happening and what should be done. We were made to make decisions that, at a later stage we could not approve of. We felt we were too much spoonfed by the secretary. Later on he was doing certain things that were uncalled for.

I was keen to get involved as president and pushed to be involved with the secretary, but he did not approve and thought I was spying. It did not work out.

We changed things through the courses. After going through a course we'd see things had to go this way.

I insisted that the whole Executive should go through courses so that they could all see what is involved for the Executive. (63)

Significantly, a two day seminar course was held by UTP on 19 to 20 November, 1977, for the Transport union's Executive Committee. The programme included a study of the union's constitution and concentrated on encouraging participation by the executive members in the course. (64)

A subsidiary struggle also developed in the Transport union over the use of a Kombi it had acquired from the International Transport Workers' Federation in 1978. The struggle was over who would have the use of the Kombi as everybody on the Executive became inclined to use it.

The dispute came to a head when the Executive Committee laid down conditions of employment for the general secretary on how he should work which the secretary could not accept. He subsequently resigned. (65)

The Transport union remained without a general secretary for more than a year. By August 1979 it was still without a full time official and consequently the union was running down organisationally. The Executive Committee was meeting less than once every 2 months and there was also a lack of co-operation within it. Membership had 'fluctuated' since May 1978. (66)

#### TAWU Structure and Practices, 1978 - 1979 (67)

In July 1978 the Transport union's signed up membership was in the region of 2700. This represented an increase over the October 1977 signed up membership figure of 2 200. Paid up membership in October 1977 was 384, (68) but probably dropped after that in view of the problems within the union. Union dues were 50 cents per week or over R2,00 per month. It was claimed that the union raised R1000 per month from members' subscriptions at the end of 1977, but the figure seems inflated in view of the number of paid up members. The union was also a member of the International Transport Workers' Federation from which it received R800 in 1976, R750 in 1977, R2123 in 1978 as well as R6800 for the purchase of a Kombi.

Ninety per cent of the membership came from the Johannesburg, Vereeniging and Pretoria regions. About two thirds of the members were drivers while the remainder were conductors, labourers and mechanics.

Clement Montsho, the former general secretary, considered a company to be well organised when the union had reached 51% membership and poorly organised when it had only 10-15%. By this criterion he estimated that 7 of the 15 companies were well, and 3 poorly, organised in mid-1978.

Montsho did not feel that Whites, Coloureds or Indians had a role to play in African trade unions as he believed that 'they

would kill off African leadership.'

At the end of his term of office, there were 29 shop stewards. The norm was for each company to have one to three shop stewards except for PUTCO in Johannesburg and ABS which had 6 members each. The tasks of the shop stewards were to collect dues and to promote union organisation. Then shop steward meetings at depots were usually weekly. A year later in July 1979 the shop stewards were not meeting. 'That's been our downfall', the president remarked.

Each time we organise a shop stewards' meeting only one or two would come in. We have breaks at different times so we cannot all meet.

We should have people who attend regularly, who know what the union is and be prepared to sacrifice off-hours. We start early hours of the morning and finish late hours of the afternoon. People want to go and sleep instead of having the heart to come to meetings.

In summary the Transport union built itself up on workers who displayed strong solidarity from PUTCO and well organised drivers from African Bus Services. The union's recognition strategy at both companies did not however succeed. Nonetheless the union grew at a number of companies and conducted an historic legal case against Bosman Transport. In 1977 the union started experiencing serious internal conflict that was centred around a dispute between the general secretary and the Executive Committee and, in particular, between the general secretary and the president. It resulted in the resignation of the general secretary in mid-1978 as well as the dismissal of the union's organiser. Further differences in the union prevented the immediate appointment of a new general secretary and the union consequently went into a downward spiral from which it had not recovered yet by July 1979.

### 3. Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU)

#### Early History

The inaugural meeting of the Sweet Food union was held on 9 February 1974 with 200 workers in attendance. Leonard (Skakes) Sikhakhane was appointed as general secretary. The constitution of the union allowed for an advisor who was not a member of the union to be appointed by the Executive Committee. Support for the union was dominated in terms of membership and leadership by workers from Weston Biscuits in Springs, a subsidiary of the Premier Milling group. In particular Longway Kwelemtini, a supervisor at Weston Biscuits, played a significant role in the union. Signed up membership of the union in the following month stood at 247. (69)

Workers from Weston had been attending a UTP seminar and were opposed to the formation of a liaison committee at Weston. Workers were in favour of a works committee, but management, aided and abetted by the Department of Labour, were trying to foist a liaison committee onto the African employees. (70) Due to sustained pressure from the workers a referendum was held at the company under the auspices of the Department of Labour in February 1974. The workers voted overwhelmingly by 240 votes to 40 in favour of a works committee which was duly elected into office. (71) As a result of these actions and the ensuing victory, union support at Weston was high. In September 1974 it had a paid-up membership of 201. (72)

The union experienced considerable harassment and intimidation at the hand of the security police during its early years of existence. The chairman of the works committee at Weston Biscuits who was also president of the union, received repeated visits from the security police who, on one occasion threatened to have him sent back to the Transkei because he was a

'trouble-maker'. (73)

Towards the end of 1974 Weston's management required female workers to work night shift. Those women whom it did not suit to do night shift due to family commitments, were forced to resign. The works committee's appeal to have them reinstated fell on deaf ears. Then, on 12 October 1975,

16 female workers were told to go on night shift. They appealed for a 6 pm until 3.30 am shift instead of the required 6 pm to 6 am shift... On the 10th November these same 16 female workers were summarily dismissed because of alleged unproductive work. (74)

The union mounted a publicity campaign against the company in the press stressing the enforced night shift of the women. A Rand Daily Mail reporter investigating the case found that

Despite producing numerous daily records the management of Weston was not able to show me how the assessment of this group's diminishing productivity had been established. (75)

The company's case collapsed and, after meeting with Sweet Food union officials, reinstated the 16 workers despite advice from the security police not to do so, compensated them for a loss in wages, and abolished night shift.

Bolstered by this success, paid up union membership at Weston's increased to 385 by September 1976. In the union as a whole signed up membership stood at 1765 and paid up at 870 in the same month. The membership was spread among 21 factories that were mainly located in the Springs area. (76)

At Weston Biscuits the works committee attempted to have a grievance procedure adopted at the company in June 1976, but without success. In the same month the UTP ran a seminar at the request of the Consultative Committee on union recognition. On the strength of that the Sweet Food union decided to make a bid for recognition at Weston Biscuit. On 16 October a letter was sent to the management enclosing a proposed recognition

agreement. It proposed formal recognition of the union as the spokesman for the workers and granting the union access to the workplace. Management's reply was an exercise in duplicity: it claimed to have no objections to the recognition of the union, provided this was done on an industry basis and had the support of a significant majority of workers of all races in the industry. (77)

The banning of three union officials a week later, 'one of whom was advisor to the union and involved in the recognition campaign' put an effective end to it. (78)

At Vaal Bottlers a strike took place over low wages in 1976 before its workers had joined the Sweet Food union. The Department of Labour was called in to deal with the dispute and told workers to return to work, but workers refused and wanted their demands met first and to know what wage increase they were receiving. The workers contacted the union which advised them to elect a committee and then to negotiate with management. They obtained their increase and thereupon joined the union. (79)

Paid up membership declined slightly by the end of 1976 when it stood at 798 in December. However, this dropped rather precipitously to 389 by July 1977. (80)

In October 1977 the Sweet Food union launched a recognition campaign in Unilever, a multi-national company. The company was opposing union recognition on the grounds that it had a liaison committee it was using. On 2 October the UTP ran a seminar for about 30 union members from Unilever on the recognition campaign. (81)

#### **Sweet Food Union Structure and Organisational Practices 1978** (82)

Because of an internal dispute that resulted in the

splitting of SFAWU during 1979 (discussed below) the situation in the union as it existed at the end of 1978 is considered here. At that time the union had approximately 4000 signed up and 450 paid up members. The paid up membership was declining. The reason for this, according to Skakes Sikhakhane, was because there were dismissals at some companies where the union would take up the case and fail. As a result disillusionment set in amongst the members. This happened at Essmor Meats, Vaal Bottlers and Epol.

The monthly dues paid by union members were R1,30. The union was however not financially self-reliant by 1978. In addition to the financial subsidisation of the union by the UTP, the union received a direct grant for R9000 from the International Union of Food Workers' Association (IUF) in 1978 for educational purposes. In the same year it also bought a Kombi from funds donated by Danish trade unions.

Of the union membership about 40% were permanent residents, 25% frontier commuters and 35% migrant workers. In Sikhakhane's judgment the migrant workers were better union members in that they remained unified once it came to action. About 90% of the members were either unskilled or semi-skilled and tended to do conveyer belt or packing work. The largest proportion of members at the end of 1978 were located on the East Rand in the Springs area. Almost two fifths came from the East Rand, whereas Johannesburg and the West Rand around Krugersdorp had one fifth of the membership each, while the Vaal area near Vereeniging had slightly less than one fifth. The remainder were in Pretoria.

The union's organising strategy was to make use of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act by setting up works committees. After organising members at a firm, a union committee for that firm would be elected in the township. Thereupon the union

members would petition management for a works committee and put forward the union committee to stand for the works committee positions. Management's countervailing strategy was to try and push the union out with a liaison committee. The union achieved success against management's strategy at Weston Biscuits, Inter-Continental Breweries (ICB), Vaal Bottlers, Irvin and Johnson and Excelsior Bakeries and had seven unionised works committees in all.

The union's first general secretary, Sikhakhane, claimed that the union did not approach management for recognition until it had well over 50%, almost 80%, membership. When the union had around 30% membership it would write to management and enclose a copy of the union's constitution in order to introduce itself. While the union was trying to gain recognition it held meetings with workers from the company every second Sunday. The meeting was held in the townships.

The first general secretary considered a company to be well organised when it nearly had 50% membership, when the works committee members were all union members and able to process a grievance, and when the secretary had access onto the premises during breaks. By those criteria he considered four companies, namely Weston Biscuits, ICB, Kelloggs and Nel's Dairy to be well organised, another twenty to be reasonably and five poorly organised.

The tasks of shop stewards in the Sweet Food union were mainly to recruit new members, to collect subscriptions, and to take up complaints where this was possible. At the end of 1978 the union had about 30 shop stewards in all, but the union placed more emphasis on using unionised works committees than shop stewards. Management tried to use liaison committees to push

the union out, but the union successfully fought for works committees at four companies.

In 1975 it was felt in the Executive Committee that the general secretary required an organiser to assist him. Sweet Food was not the only union he was looking after. The Executive Committee decided to appoint Maggie Magubane, who had been an activist in Weston Biscuits, as full time organiser.

The secretary did not think there was a role for Whites, Coloureds and Indians in the union unless the union approached them for their expertise. Sikhakhane explained why he held these views:

People are very suspicious of institutions where there is a White man. Time and again I was asked what are the Whites doing in UTP. I'd say we need them, but people remained sceptical.

However, the Sweet Food union was not to be spared from inner conflict and the organiser became one of the key figures in the subsequent confrontation in the union.

#### Dispute in SFAWU, 1978 - 1979

The dispute within SFAWU focussed initially around an incident between the organiser, Maggie Magubane, and the president of the union, Longway Kwelemtini. Although there had apparently been a longstanding difference between them, it finally erupted over payment for the transport arrangements of the union's AGM in November 1978. Different accounts exist over what exactly happened, but there was agreement that there was a fight between the president and organiser over filling in blank cheques signed by the president and that she tried to assault him. (83)

A new Executive Committee was elected at the AGM on 26 November 1978, but it was a divided house, with one side supporting the Magubani and the other supporting Kwelemtini and

Sikhakhane. At the December meeting of the Executive the organiser was dismissed and the president was expelled from the union. However, at an Executive meeting in January 1979 this decision was reversed and both the organiser and president were reinstated. (84)

On 3 and 21 February 1979 two Executive Committee meetings were held where the decisions that were taken were hotly contested by either side. (85) According to Sikhakhane there was pressure from the membership for a general meeting to be called, but the executive committee refused to do so. (86) However, a general meeting was called by the Kwelemtini group on 11 March 1979. At that meeting a vote of no confidence was passed in the Executive Committee and a Caretaker Executive Committee was elected. The meeting was however found to be unconstitutional and its decisions were therefore of no effect.

As a result of these difficulties an Executive meeting was held on 21 March with legal representatives from both sides being present. At that meeting it was voted by ten votes to three to dismiss the general secretary, Skakes Sikhakhane, and replace him with Maggie Magubane and to place control of the assets of the union (including the Kombi) under her. (87) (The reason why the general secretary was dismissed by the Executive is discussed in the next section.)

Once again the struggle for the control of the union's assets intensified. The following day angry supporters of the Kwelemtini group removed the union's assets from the Head Office 'so that Magubane's supporters could not possess them.' (88) The union's Kombi also went missing and was found at the house of a union member after the Executive went to court over the matter. (89)

The end result of the dispute was that Sikhakhane and the Kwelemtini group decided to break away and form a new union, the Food, Beverage Workers' Union of South Africa. It held its inaugural meeting on 5 August 1979 and Skakes Sikhakhane was elected general secretary.

#### Reasons for the Dispute in SFAWU •

The dust had not yet settled by the end of August 1979 which made it difficult to discern which companies' members had followed the break away union because both unions were claiming the support of the same companies. It seemed however as if the Sweet Food union had retained mainly the East Rand companies with the probably exception of Weston Biscuits, and possibly some companies in the Vaal area. The Food Beverage union on the other hand had probably taken the Johannesburg and West Rand companies into its fold. (90)

What were the deeper underlying reasons for the internal conflict and split in the Sweet Food union? Skakes Sikhakhane saw the dispute as a regional one with a political overtone. The Engineering union dispute influenced Maggie Magubane because she and Calvin Nkabinde were working together in offices in Springs and she was living in Kwa Thema. Nkabinde was also in favour of working with the Feasibility Committee that led to the formation of FOSATU. He influenced Magubane, Sikhakhane stated. However the Sweet Food union Executive Committee was opposed to the Feasibility Committee in 1977 because it was in the Consultative Committee which had put forward certain resolutions which the Feasibility Committee had ignored. (91)

Magubane was in favour of the aims and objects of FOSATU and was critical of the Consultative Committee because it had no constitution and only secretaries went to the meetings. They

also did not report back to their members afterwards. She considered this to be a basic cause of the split, although she was also not on good terms with the president.

In addition the Executive Committee felt that Sikhakhane had taken on too much work and was not functioning properly as secretary of the Sweet Food union. In addition to being secretary of the Sweet Food union he was also Director of the UTP, chairman of the Consultative Committee, as well as general secretary of the Building union. As a result there were numerous allegations of inefficiency made against the secretary:

In May 1978 Mr. Sikhakhane met with the management of Kellogs who were prepared to recognise our union but the first step was to send them a list of our members in the factory. It is now the 22nd February 1979 and he has still not sent them the list. It is the executive committee's view that Mr.L.Sikhakhane is too involved in other matters to pay attention to his duties as General Secretary of our Union. (92)

It was also argued that he failed to approach Essmor management for recognition by the workers when the union had 70% membership in the company. As a result the union lost members there. At Vaal Bottlers and Epol he failed to write to management at the request of workers. (93)

Another complaint against the secretary on the part of the Executive was that he was alleged to act on behalf of the union without informing the Executive of his actions. As cases they cited that he made a press statement on Inkatha without discussing it first with the Executive and that he launched an international campaign against Unilever without authorisation from the Executive Committee. They furthermore alleged that he did so when the union only had 60 members out of a potential 2 000 at the company.

The accusation regarding the international campaign against Unilever was largely misplaced as it was commenced by an

international group of their own accord who informed Sikhakhane of their intent. He was potentially at fault not trying to prevent them from doing it. Union membership at Unilever was also greater than the critics claimed, but the union's organisation at the plant was not good because it was a vast factory and therefore difficult to organise. (94)

The final accusation against Sikhakhane was that he used and disbursed union resources and finances without authorisation from the Executive Committee. It was alleged that he used the union's Kombi and petrol account during the union's annual shut down without Executive authorisation, and that he paid a R150 fine for other union members as well as an air ticket for a UTP Durban staff member without due authorisation. (95)

In reply the secretary explained that he consulted the union's president about the payment of the fine and air ticket and that the Kombi was used during the holiday for transporting Nel's Dairy workers as a matter of urgency in their conflict with management. He also denied that he was a members of Inkatha, but conceded that he did make a statement on Inkatha. (96)

To conclude, the conflict within the Sweet Food Union was essentially fought out between officials and office-bearers in the Executive Committee. It was not a conflict that involved rank and file membership. The members were only called in when one or the other side tried to strengthen its constitutional or popular position. The conflict between the officials and office-bearers in the Executive focussed around the general secretary, president, vice-president and treasurer on one side with the organiser and almost all of the remaining Executive members on the other side.

The conflict between them revolved around the following issues. The established power base, especially the general

secretary, was challenged on the grounds that he usurped too much power and because he neglected union affairs. The majority of the Executive Committee and the organiser wanted to have a greater say in the running of the affairs of the union. There was a political division between the two sides in that the organiser and her group supported the principles and policy of FOSATU while the secretary and his group were committed to the Consultative Committee. To a large extent the division was also a regional one. With the exception of Weston Biscuits where the president worked, the East Rand workers supported Magubane while the Johannesburg and West Rand workers supported Sikhakhane. Workers in the Vaal area appear to have been divided over the issue.

A major aspect of the conflict also revolved around control over the resources of the union. In particular the conflict was over control of the union's financial expenditure and over the use of the Kombi. Although the conflict intensified as the situation polarised it was present at the start of the dispute. There were also personal differences between the organiser and president, but the differences were often tied up with the conflicting issues.

By February 1979, if not earlier, the conflict in the Sweet Food polarised the union effectively into two groups so that it effectively started operating as two unions. The Magubane group operated from Springs and the Sikhakhane group from Johannesburg. Towards the end of 1978 the Sikhakhane group became involved in a tough conflict with particularly intransigent employers at Nel's Dairy in which the union showed great solidarity with the workers who persevered in their struggle to the end.

### The Nel's Dairy Struggle

In 1978 the Sweet Food union had commenced organising the African workers at Nel's Dairy in Victory Park, Johannesburg. The dairy employed an African labour force of about 330 workers most of whom were migrant workers from the Rustenburg area. They lived in hostels in Alexandra and were transported free of charge to and from work in company buses.

Working conditions at Nel's Dairy were very unpleasant because of the harshness of management which was basically composed of Nel brothers and their sons. Workers were faced with fines for having dirty trucks, fines for arriving late at work, and deductions for amounts stolen from various drivers. Some of the deductions were illegal in which case they were not made from the regular wage pay slips, but on a separate slip of paper. (97) In such cases it was alleged to be the practice of the company to get an employee's signature to an acknowledgement of debt in terms of which he incorrectly admitted to having borrowed monies from the company. (Mabaso, Affidavit, 11 June 1979, paragraph 5e(vi).) One of the cases of illegal deductions was utterly reprehensible.

In January 1977, Greatman Seabelo, a truck driver of Nel's Dairy, was robbed of about R1 700 of the company's money while on duty. In spite of the fact that there was an independent eyewitness present J.H. Nel made him sign a form under threat of going to jail. The form stated that Seabelo had borrowed money from the firm. That month and the next R100 was deducted from Seabelo's monthly wage of R170 until he complained that he could not support his family on the money that was left. Thereupon R60 was deducted from his monthly wage until the amount stolen had been recovered. After the full amount had been paid back Seabelo was dismissed in April 1979. Owing to the court

action on the part of the union in its struggles against Nel's Dairy, Seabelo's plight came to the attention of lawyers. In a settlement out of court he was paid back R1580, the full amount that had been deducted from his salary. (98)

There was also no suitable way for workers to air their grievances and have them set right. In 1973 there had been a major confrontation because workers wanted to be paid weekly rather than monthly. According to one worker a Nel brother called the workers in one by one and enquired whether they preferred weekly or monthly wages. Those favouring weekly wages were dismissed. (99) With that experience of management workers were unlikely to raise their grievances with management.

Around August 1978 the union organisation had reached the stage of electing a union committee of 15 members that it wanted to establish at the company as a registered works committee. (100) As a result a petition signed by 90 workers and requesting the formation of a works committee was sent by post to management. It was sent by post out of fear of victimisation for those who would otherwise have delivered it to management. (101) Management claimed that one of its Coloured employees took a sounding of African workers' opinions and came up with the finding that about 93 favoured the formation of a liaison committee. In view of the fact that only a minority of workers had requested a works committee management took no action. (102)

The union soon sent a second petition by post signed by more than 150 workers requesting the formation of a works committee. (103) Management however claimed never to have received the second petition.

Due to further representations from workers Nel's Dairy management, who had made it clear to their workers that they

favoured the formation of a liaison committee, decided to call a meeting where workers could elect a committee. After a number of failed attempts a meeting was held on 13 December 1978 where 94% of the African labour force was present as well as 3 officials from the Labour Department. (104) Accounts of what happened at the meeting differ. According to J.H. Nel, who chaired the meeting, workers became rowdy after the first non-union candidate was nominated for the committee and staged a walk-out. (105) According to J.Mabaso the workers accepted the nomination of non-union members, but walked out when the chairman, J.H. Nel, had ignored the nomination of a prominent worker leader. They feared that he would only allow his supporters of to be elected onto the committee. (106)

Mabaso's account is most probably the reliable rendition of what happened. The Nels were clearly strongly opposed to the election of a works committee. In an interview with the managing director of the Dairy, Mr J.D. Nel, he said there was intimate contact between management and the workers on a liaison committee, but with a works committee the workers met separately and they had the opportunity to elect an agitator to speak to management which would not resolve matters. (107) This was said in spite of the fact that he made a sworn statement to the contrary that he had no objection to the formation of a works committee at Nel's Dairy. (108)

On 28 December 1978, at a time of the year when the union was in its annual recess, Nel's management decided at one day's notice to hold a meeting after work in order to elect a works committee. But only a dozen workers turned up for the meeting in what was probably a deliberate boycott of the meeting on the part of workers because they had lost confidence in management's intentions and they may not have had time to prepare for the

meeting. (109)

In the wake of the inadequate communication channels and the high level of frustration and mistrust of management on the part of workers, other grievances emerged. In particular, workers became discontented with the pension scheme and demanded their money back. The conflict boiled over into a strike by about 200 African workers on 27 March 1979. Different reasons were advanced for the strike, all of which were probably valid. The managing director, J.D. Nel, attributed it to the company's refusal to pay back pension monies, (110) while newspaper reports linked it to the demand for a democratically elected works committee (111) and the reinstatement of 4 workers who had been fired the previous week. (112) Management called in the police to deal with the strike and the managing director wanted the police to arrest the 'ringleaders' (belhamels), but the police advised them that it was not in management's best interest for them to discriminate against certain workers only. (113) None of the workers were arrested and they all returned to work shortly after the police arrived. The security police were also present and harassed Skakes Sikhakhane who had been called to assist by the workers. (114)

Thereupon management decided to adopt an even tougher policy towards the workers. The managing director declared:

Then the writing was on the wall. We had been too soft on the workers. We did not maintain enough discipline. I had a list of the ringleaders (belhamels) and I searched for reasons to dismiss them. They also played right into my hands. (115)

Management set about dismissing what it deemed to be the ringleaders with such determination that it became necessary for the union to take urgent defensive action. By 9 May 1979 eighteen of the workers had been fired and the remaining union

activists strongly suspected that they would also be victimised. As a result 24 of them filed an urgent application to the Supreme Court requesting an interdict that would restrain Nel's Dairy from dismissing them because they wanted to introduce a works committee. In order to avoid an interdict, Nel's voluntarily undertook in Court on 10 May, 1979, not to victimise any of its employees who were attempting to set up a works committee. (116)

This undertaking did not however deter Nel's management and they continued to dismiss active union members. In particular, management was vindictive towards Joseph Mabaso, the worker in whose name the urgent Court application had been filed. He was watched very carefully ('fyn dopgehou') by management and on 11 July 1979 he was fired in the presence of the company's lawyer. Mabaso was dismissed on the grounds that he was alleged to have said that 'he will cut the company's bosses necks, feet and ending with their tails' and that he would set fire to the company's premises. (117)

By that stage management had dismissed 6 more union activists since giving the undertaking not to victimise workers and Mabaso was again constrained to take legal action against Nel's Dairy. He called on the court to set aside his dismissal with receipt of all back-pay, to fine the company and to fine or jail J.D. Nel. He advanced that his dismissal was both a contravention of the law and contempt of court in view of the undertaking given to the Court not to victimise workers. (118)

The hearing of the case was scheduled for 18 March 1980, but it was settled out of court at the last moment. In return for dropping the case Nel's Dairy agreed to contribute R25 000 to costs of the applicants. Of this R15 000 went directly to 30 workers who had been dismissed under circumstances comprising victimisation, and R10 000 went to legal costs. Skakes

Sikhakhane, general secretary of the Food, Beverage Workers' Union, said that

The union regards it as a great victory for the workers for Nel's Dairy to agree to pay costs. But, the tragedy is all but one of the original leaders among the workers have been dismissed. (119)

The case demonstrated a remarkable solidarity and resilience of the migrant workers and their union at Nel's Dairy. However, in spite of the legal victory, the case also showed the limits of legal action in that the union lost its strongest and most active members at Nel's Dairy. It also showed the ability of implacable management to thwart a union's efforts to organise workers, but at a cost. The managing director, J.D. Nel, was prepared for this. After the undertaking not to victimise workers and after Mabaso had brought a civil action against him, he observed

Now I have four persons who are busy recruiting members for the union and I feel I must get rid of them. Three of them are involved in the case. I mean to do it and foot the bill. (120)

#### 1.4 Laundry, Dry Cleaning and Dyeing Workers' Association (121)

##### Early History

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the National Union of African Laundry Workers was operating with some measure of success and it was one of the few SACTU unions that carried on operating. (158) However in 1968-69 some of the leaders embezzled money of the union and workers lost confidence in the union. With the aid of Eric Tyacke the union was revived in 1972 with the title 'Association' in order to try and restore workers' confidence. Agnes Mapopi Molefe was appointed general secretary of the union.

Union membership grew very rapidly at first. This was

because of work place grievances and because the subscriptions were very low at 20 cents per month. The secretary considered this to be a mistake as members left the union after dues increased in 1974. Signed up membership stood at 555 in September 1973 and increased to 1029 three years later in September 1976, but paid up membership then stood at only 319. (122)

In 1973 the Laundry union participated informally in the Industrial Council for the Laundry, Dry Cleaning and Dyeing Trade and, as a result, the major company in the union, Advanced Laundries, as well as ten smaller companies, allowed stop order deductions in the following year. As a result union membership at Advanced Laundries increased dramatically because workers interpreted this as some form of approval of the union. However, after August 1975 when the union instituted a successful claim against Advance Laundries to the value of R4843 for the death of a worker on the premises, the company turned against the union. It appointed a personnel manager whose task it was to undermine the union. Membership at the company fell from a peak of 700 out of 1200 to only 100 paid up members early in 1977. The secretary felt that the workers were also to blame for the situation because they did not attend educational courses. (123)

During 1975 a two and a half month organising drive was held in the Laundry union. A group of three organisers specially sponsored by the British TUC worked in conjunction with the union secretary. As a result breakthroughs were made in several companies obtaining enrolments of over 50%. However, since each of the unions in the organising drive was allocated only two and a half months each, the team had to withdraw at the peak of a very positive response. The secretary then had to struggle on her own and was not able to sustain the level reached by the

team. (124)

Although the secretary fully believed in the strike weapon, the situation in the industry made it very difficult for the union to use it. Nonetheless, over the years strikes had taken place on a number of occasions during negotiations at Advanced Laundries, Flamingo and two other companies. The union faced a predicament at Advanced Laundries during the mid-1970s: there were some 300 men who were due for retirement and had from 20 to 50 years service. If they took industrial action they stood to lose their retirement benefits. They therefore had to take care not to give management any excuse for dismissing them. (125)

#### Union Structure and Practices 1979

Union membership had fluctuated for various reasons over the years. By July 1979 there were 2050 signed up, but only 300 paid up members in the union. It operated mainly in Johannesburg with more than 80% of the members and firms concentrated in that area. About half of the members were permanent residents with the remainder being migrant workers. Most of the members were, according to the secretary, unskilled workers.

The union was faced with a long term structural problem due to product changes in the textile and clothing industries and technological changes in the laundry industry. Clothes were increasingly being made from synthetic fibres that did not require either dry cleaning or ironing. Consequently the demand for such firms was dwindling and thus employment was also falling in that industry. Similarly, technological changes also reduced the demand for labour. Sophisticated presses, operated by two workers, were brought in to replace from six up to ten workers who did ironing before. The Laundry union was therefore

faced with a steady reduction of its members as workers were made redundant.

The secretary, who was the only organiser in the union, considered a company to be well organised when the members were united and could tackle anything for themselves, where a good relationship existed between management and the union, and where work conditions had improved. A poorly organised firm was one where management could do what it liked. By these standards she considered 15 out of about 60 of the companies being organised by the union to be well organised and ten to be poorly organised. The three best organised companies were Advance Laundries, Flamingo and National Dye where the union also had shop stewards committees.

In all the Laundry union had about 35 shop stewards and four shop stewards committees. The committees met every three weeks. They were elected by members at their place of work and kept their positions indefinitely. The tasks of the shop stewards were to help organising, collect subscriptions, take grievances to the union office and to tell the secretary about the conditions at work. The task of solving grievance thus fell on the union's secretary where there were no shop stewards committees. In companies where the committees existed, the shop stewards themselves handled grievances.

While she was able to take up grievances with management, she also referred many complaints to the Industrial Council which solved a lot of them. Because of the union's close ties with the registered union, the African Laundry union attended Industrial Council negotiations informally. These informal negotiations were conducted until agreement was reached between all the parties present and the unregistered union would withdraw

for the formal signing of the agreement.

The secretary had a non-confrontationalist approach towards union organisation. When commencing to organise a new firm she would usually go to management first, introduce herself, and explain why she was there. Only afterwards would she go to the workers.

The union's subscription rate was R1,30 per month of which 40 cents was paid to Homes Trust for funeral insurance. The union raised approximately R250 per month from subscriptions. It also received a monthly subsidy of R100 from the UTP.

In conclusion, although the Laundry union had been in existence for a very long time, it was a relatively small union in 1979. The most important reason for this was probably the long term reduction in the size of the industry. The secretary consequently did not adopt an aggressive organisational approach to try and improve working conditions and increase workers' rights. These factors probably accounted for the union's lack of growth.

### 1.5 The SA Chemical Workers' Union (SACWU) (126)

#### History, Structure and Organisation

SACWU was founded in the 1950s as the African Chemical Workers' Union, but its membership and organisation collapsed over time. At the request of Thelma de Klerk, secretary of the registered Chemical Workers' Union which was affiliated to TUCSA, it was revived by the UTP in the early 1970s. Dan Tau, a staff member of the UTP, became the general secretary of the union in 1974.

In 1976 and 1977 there were two strikes at firms organised by the union. The secretary of the union went along to the workers and enquired what their grievances were and whether there

were no better way of solving them. In one case a third of the work force was dismissed.

By August 1979 the union had about 1300 paid up and about 3000 signed up members. The bulk of the members, about 70 to 80% were permanent residents and the remaining 20 to 30 were contract workers. Approximately 70% of the members were unskilled labourers while another 20% were semi-skilled. The union concentrated most of its organisation in Johannesburg and the near East Rand. About two thirds of the members worked in the East Rand over the Alberton, Germiston and Isando region, and about one fifth worked in Johannesburg.

The SA Chemical Workers' Union worked closely with the registered Chemical Workers' Union which provided it with access to the industrial council for the industry and stop order facilities. The monthly union subscriptions were R1,40 per month most of which was collected by stop order. The remainder was collected by shop stewards. In July 1979 the income from subscriptions was R1018 suggesting a paid up membership of 727 for that month. (127)

The general secretary's aim for the union was to participate fully on the industrial council so as to have a share in the decision-making. He used the agents of the industrial council a great deal when there had been unfair dismissals or even pay disputes. The union provided two industrial council benefits which were a Provident Fund and Sick Pay. It also had a Group Funeral Scheme and a Bursary Fund for members. The industrial council benefits, stop order deductions and the use of its agents would not have been possible without the aid of the registered union.

The organising strategy of the secretary was non-

confrontationalist. When commencing to organise a factory, he would at times first go to management to ask whether he could talk to members during the lunch break. The secretary observed that this strategy

does give one an advantage because then management does not have so much suspicion, but workers are sometimes reluctant to join because the secretary is seen as a management man.

The union's progress in obtaining recognition and negotiation rights had been slow. The union secretary was allowed onto most company premises, and there were a few shop stewards that had recognition of some kind or other, but the union had not negotiated any grievance or dismissal procedures by August 1979. Nor was it negotiating directly with management at any company over wages and working conditions.

The secretary had a stringent condition for a factory to be well organised. By his criteria the union had to have about 80% membership, the members had to be aware of the union, know their own duties and participate in its activities. By these criteria he judged more or less half of the thirteen companies where the union had a presence to be well organised. This estimation appeared to be over-optimistic in the light of the relatively small number of shop stewards in the union.

The union secretary had good insight into the role of shop stewards. He described a shop steward as 'a mouthpiece of the workers and the eye of the union'. But in spite thereof shop stewards did not have a central role in the life of the union. It had no shop steward committees as the shop stewards were mostly represented on liaison committees. There were also only about 23 shop stewards elected out of a target of 48 which the union had set itself.

The Executive Committee of the union was elected by members

at an AGM every second year. The Executive members' tasks were to build up the union. They participated a great deal in the affairs of the union. A weekend seminar held at Hammanskraal in July 1979 had in fact been run by the Executive Committee. At the following Executive meeting on 25 August 1979 the seminar was discussed and useful ways of improving it were suggested.

At the same Executive Committee meeting a start was also made with a revision of the union's constitution. Phiroshaw Camay, then employed by the Institute for Industrial Relations in Johannesburg, was invited to assist in the exercise. He handed out a list of provisions contained in the constitutions of some registered trade unions. They then commenced revising the constitution by following the provisions from the top of the list downwards. Each provision was treated with the same degree of importance whether it was the definitions or the objects of the union. When they were asked whether they wanted an organisation where the top Executive gave instructions down or the other way round, there was agreement all round after some discussion that the Executive was to be in charge. The argument that clinched the discussion was that, they, the Executive, were working on a Saturday afternoon while the members were watching football.

Although it came up in the discussion that the union was to be a democratic organisation, there was no initial discussion by the Executive on what they considered to be the fundamental principles of the union, what the union's basic objectives were meant to be, and how they could ensure that it would be a democratic workers' organisation with its strength based on the workers' power at the workplace. Nor did they discuss whether they envisaged the union becoming registered or not and what the implications thereof would be for the constitution. Instead, the reformulation of the constitution was done item by item

without considering the key issues first. This approach was largely due to the lead that Camay was giving to the meeting. It also appeared as if no Executive member had worked through the existing constitution beforehand and given some thought to the required changes. There was also no evidence that any of the Executive members had consulted any members at their factories on the provisions that should be contained in their union's constitution. As a result there was a tendency to put a heavy reliance on the guidance given by Phiroshaw Camay at the meeting. (128)

In summary, the SA Chemical union had attained a fairly high paid up membership by August 1979, but this level of membership was not matched with a strong organisational presence in the factories. This was due to the fact that it tended to operate by placing a reliance on stop order payments and the industrial council agent instead of shop stewards to deal with workplace grievances.

#### 6. The Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of SA (CCAWUSA) (129)

##### History, Structure and Organisation

CCAWUSA was founded in 1975 as an African union through the initiative of the National Union of Distributive Workers and the National Union of Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers. They were assisted financially by an international trade secretariat, the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees (FEIT), and administratively by the UTP. Emma Mashinini was appointed as the organising secretary by an interim committee including Ray Altman, Morris Kagan, Eric Tyacke, Loet Douwes Dekker, Skakes Sikhakhane and Mr. Khumalo of the Commercial Travellers Union. (130)

Union membership grew quite rapidly and by August 1979 it had well over 3000 signed up and about 1500 paid up members. Most of the members were permanent residents and the secretary considered members to be semi-skilled. The stronghold of the union was in the East Rand where it had over 1000 members although most of the members worked in the city and suburbs of Johannesburg. There were approximately 400 members in the West Rand and about 200 each in Pretoria and the Vaal area.

Monthly subscriptions to the union were R1,20 of which 40 cents went to a Group Funeral Scheme. The union was affiliated to two international trade secretariats, FEIT and the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Association (IUF). It had received a total of R22 000 in financial assistance from the time it had started up to August 1979.

The only criterion that the secretary deemed necessary for a company to be well organised was to have a membership of 60%. The firms that were considered well organised by the secretary were OK Bazaars, Macro, Checkers, Greatermans, Edgars and ABC. The union had company committees at most stores. Some of them met twice monthly while others existed only in name. They were probably the equivalent of shop stewards committees as CCAWUSA had over 50 shop stewards even though its constitution made no provision for shop stewards or their equivalents nor specified what their roles would be.

The union had been involved in disputes. In 1977 workers at Checkers Northmead Mall, Benoni, walked out over the dismissal of a worker. They proceeded to the union office and the union negotiated a successful reinstatement of all the workers including the one who had been dismissed. The following year there was a similar episode at Macro when two workers were dismissed and at Greatermans workers took it upon themselves to

challenge management for not allowing the organising secretary onto the premises. The right to enter the premises was however not won.

The secretary was the only organiser in the union until 1978 when another organiser was appointed. In 1979 a further two organisers were appointed one of whom organised the newly opened Natal branch of the union. The secretary considered personnel officers a major obstacle to organising workers because they offered free services to the workers and claimed that they could do it better than the union. An organiser considered the lack of access onto company premises and fear of victimisation on the part of workers to be the major obstacles. (131) The organiser, who also had educational responsibilities, considered illiteracy to be a problem because workers had to know what their rights were. And for that they had to be able to read the statutes, agreements and determinations.

At all the companies where the union had members, except Pick and Pay, the organisers were not allowed onto the premises even during lunch and tea breaks. This did not bother the secretary who even preferred it to some extent because criticisms could not be made that her union was experiencing privileges because of its links with registered unions in the same trade. It shared the same premises with these unions in Johannesburg. The only formal recognition that the union had was the handling of grievances at four companies.

Although the secretary emphasized that she co-operated with White, Coloured and Indian trade unionists, she favoured African leadership in the union. In 1979 she said:

We'd like to see Black people emerging as leaders and capable of doing things that were done for them in the past.

CCAWUSA did not join the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) when it was formed in 1980, but nor had it joined FOSATU which was founded the year before. It participated in the 'unity talks' to found a new federation and in August 1985 it opened its constitution to all workers regardless of race. (132) As a non-racial union it was a founder member of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) which was launched in November 1985.

#### 1.7 The Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU)

Although the Glass and Allied Workers' Union was formally founded in April 1975, it was already operating as a union in 1974. The union owed its origin to courses run for workers by the UTP during 1974. An Action Committee to establish a union was subsequently formed by worker leaders from Pilkington Brothers (SA), Plate Glass and Shatterprufe Industries, and Armourplate Safety Glass. (133) Armourplate and Pilkington Brothers, whose plants were situated in Springs, were both subsidiary companies of Pilkington Brothers in the United Kingdom.

Once it became known that the UTP intended unionising African glass workers, Mr L.(Steve) Scheepers, secretary of the TUCSA registered glass union, attempted to quash the efforts of UTP by claiming that he was operating a parallel union for Africans. He could, however, not furnish any hard evidence to prove that such a union actually existed and his efforts to prevent the formation of GAWU was unsuccessful. (134)

GAWU grew quite rapidly after its inaugural meeting on 5 April 1975: within two months 200 workers from five companies had joined. By June 1976 signed up membership had reached 760 and paid up membership stood at 260. This support of the

workers can in part be ascribed to the militancy of the union and the successful outcome of a strike it was involved in at Pilkington Brothers in November 1974.

#### Strike at Pilkington Brothers

As a result of the UTP training courses workers at the South African subsidiary decided to elect works committees in the seven departments of the company. This required some struggle on their part which almost led to the victimisation of the union's president, Churchill Mhlanga, who acted as a spokesman for the workers. (135) After a threatened strike management yielded to the workers and the works committees were elected in May 1974. A co-ordinating works committee was also established. Frustration built up amongst workers in one of the warehouse and cutting departments as management steadfastly refused to deal with issues raised by the works committee. Over this period there was a drop in production which management ascribed to a deliberate go-slow on the part of the workers. (136) The workers in these departments constituted about 300 of the 1600 Africans employed at Pilkington.

Finally, the tension spilt over into a strike when management first dismissed a forklift driver with twelve years' service and then a worker with twenty two years service who dared to ask management a challenging question in connection with the dismissal. The following day, Wednesday, 5 November 1974, African workers at both warehouses went on strike by standing outside the factory and refusing to enter the gates. Management thereupon decided to negotiate with the works committee. At first it appeared as if agreement would be reached between them, but when the Works Manager stated that 'there were some rotten potatoes amongst us' which he would not re-employ the committee

found it unacceptable and terminated the meeting. (137)

Further attempts to resolve the dispute met without success, but the following afternoon workers heard in the townships that they could all return to work and that there would be no victimisation nor selective re-employment.

However, when the workers reported to work the next day, 22 workers, including 7 committee members, were not re-employed because they had instigated the dispute. (138)

An urgent application was thereupon filed in the Supreme Court claiming victimisation in terms of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act. Management at first opposed the action, but on the recommendation of the judge, management decided to settle out of court. (139) The settlement was undoubtedly a victory for the workers and the union. Pilkington Brothers agreed to re-employ the dismissed workers and to pay a sum of R2000 as compensation for hardships caused by their dismissal.

The company furthermore agreed not to victimise any of the employees for instituting the court action and 'to consult with the full Works Committee with regard to any dismissals arising from redundancy'. Because of management's belief that workers had engaged in a go-slow the parties built into the agreement that the employees would 'raise the productivity in the warehouses back to normal day-work' and would 'undertake not to participate in or promote activities relating to go-slow working, illegal work stoppages and illegal strikes'. (140)

Finally, management even went as far as stating that 'it has no objection to the establishment of a trade union with a reasonable constitution, and ... may at its discretion consult with the Urban Training Project.' (141) These were however hollow words as management persistently resisted the recognition

of GAWU over the following three years. The strategy adopted by management was to preserve the works committee and justify not recognising the union on the grounds that it was conforming to government policy. In October 1975, even when the works committee assured management that all the African employees at the company, including the works committee, were in favour of the company opening negotiations with GAWU, management decided against union recognition because they claimed that they could not 'take any action in conflict with Government policy and legislation'. (142)

Eighteen months later, in March 1977, GAWU once again tried to gain recognition from Pilkington Brothers. The secretary of the union, Jacob Nthebe, wrote to the general manager informing him that the union had a signed up membership of 420 at the factory and that the Executive Committee had instructed him to request formal recognition of the union 'as well as an agreement to formalise the rights of shop stewards to represent our members in the company'. (143) The general manager used the same strategy to prevent union recognition, but found it necessary to explain why it was doing so as a multinational company:

It is Pilkington's policy always to behave as good citizens by operating in accordance with the law and to take account of the policy of the Government of the country in which we operate. (144)

In the meanwhile GAWU had become locked in an even more intense struggle at Armourplate Safety Glass, also a subsidiary of Pilkington Brothers in Britain. The union entered into an historic strike against Armourplate in September 1976: it was the first ever legal strike by African workers in the country's history and lasted no less than eight weeks.

### The Armourplate Safety Glass strike

GAWU had great difficulty making headway at Armourplate. After a first failed attempt to utilise the works committee, the union managed to make some progress after a new committee was elected. In June 1976 it reached an agreement with the company to scrap old service records which, management agreed, had been unfairly compiled. During the following month the works committee was consulted by management about the recession and agreed to work a four-day week in order to prevent retrenchments. (145)

Ten days later however management dismissed three workers whose average length of service was four years on the grounds that they were reducing staff. The workers were very angry about this and saw this as management breaking its word. When challenged by the works committee, management claimed that the workers were actually dismissed for bad employment records and produced the old record cards to substantiate their claim. Workers were even more incensed about this and saw it as a breach of faith on the part of management. They decided to take the required steps to commence a legal strike in order to try and get the dismissed workers reinstated. (146)

During the thirty day period required to carry out a legal strike in terms of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act two approaches were made by the union to management to try and settle the dispute, but they were turned down by management. (147) The union executive committee also met twice with the works committee and cautioned them against striking because the recession made workers highly vulnerable. (148)

Nonetheless, at a meeting attended by 120 workers in the local township on the first weekend after the expiry of the thirty days waiting period, they decided to proceed with the

strike. They were particularly incensed by a recent public statement by the chairman of the company, Mr John Breakspear, that 'the call for strike action by the works committee had been taken without sounding out workers in the factory'. (149)

On Monday morning, 6 September 1976, the African employees proceeded to the changeroom and waited while the works committee made a final attempt to resolve the dispute. Police were outside the factory and told the organiser and secretary of the union to disperse. Management was still unwilling to re-employ the three retrenched workers and 180 of the 200 African employees at Armourplate commenced on the first legal strike by African workers in the country's history. (150)

In spite of the legality of the strike, Armourplate dismissed the striking workers, but publically claimed that the workers had resigned. (151) The strike lasted eight weeks from the union's side. It kept going for such a long time because the strikers were determined and united. Most of them attended a meeting of strikers held each weekday and night. They suffered considerably during the strike even though families and neighbours were very supportive of the majority of them. (152)

The striking workers also received tangible expressions of solidarity from local and international sources. As a result GAWU was able to assist the strikers financially, but still to a rather limited extent. It paid out R5,00 per worker on three occasions and R12,00 per worker once. The total paid over to striking workers came close to R4000. Financial assistance came from branches of other unions on the East Rand by collecting from their members and donations were also made by EAWU, the Laundry Workers' Association, and NUMARWOSA. Glass workers in the British General and Municipal Workers' Union which covered the

parent company at St Helens, England, as well as the ICFTU (International Conference of Free Trade Unions) and the Canadian Labour Conference donated money to the strikers. Through a request to the British TUC the General and Municipal Workers' Union also made several attempts to resolve the dispute, but without success. (153)

The strike had another unique feature in that the union tried to organise a legal picket of the company. The event and its consequences for the strikers were described as follows by the union:

On September 23rd striking workers commenced a picket at Armourplate. Workers holding placards walked at deliberately big intervals along the pavement up to the firm and back. First to appear was management who took a close look and went into the factory. Shortly after one policeman arrived by car. Later police vans arrived and 27 workers were taken to the police station. Within a few hours they were in front of a Magistrate and convicted under the Riotous Assemblies Act. They were each fined R50,00 or 75 days and detained at Modderbee prison... The unusual speed with which this case was handled surprised everyone including legal advisors, and the men were not represented in Court. (154)

The workers took the case on appeal and the Supreme Court held that the accused had not been granted a fair trial. Their convictions were consequently set aside. (155)

Further police involvement took place when it was reported that the Security Police were calling in striking workers for interrogation in groups. No further action followed from their intimidatory action. (156)

The Department of Labour refused to mediate in the dispute and came down on management's side. Whereas its officials first adopted the position that the workers had been dismissed, they later told the workers that they had 'deserted'. (157)

The company rapidly took steps to ensure the continuation of their operations, but met with some difficulties. Two weeks after the strike commenced the company had recruited 35 African

workers. Attempts to re-employ key workers who were out on strike failed. Workers at Pilkington Glass were also approached to fill in at Armourplate, but they refused. (158) Later two Coloured workers from Armourplate in Port Elizabeth were flown in to teach new workers, but when they discovered what was happening they made contact with the striking workers. They left shortly afterwards. (159)

However, the recession was working in favour of the company. Mr Breakspear was quoted in one paper as saying that the company was cutting its labour force from 200 to 113 because of the recession. (160) The strike may therefore have come at a very opportune time for the company.

The company was in a stronger position than the strikers who made a number of attempts to gain a settlement. Altogether three letters were sent, but no reply was received, and a number of phone calls were also made in vain. Finally, on 12 October GAWU, with the agreement of the strikers, asked the Institute of Industrial Relations to mediate in the dispute. However Mr Breakspear showed no interest in the proposal. (161)

In the light of Armourplate's rejection of the mediation offer, the strikers met on 1 November 1976 and decided to terminate their strike which had lasted eight weeks. They proceeded to the factory to have their passes signed off and collect outstanding pay and pension money. They refused an offer to apply for reinstatement. (162)

The loss of all the union's members at Armourplate completely annihilated union organisation at the plant. It was thus considerably weakened by the strike.

### GAWU Structures and Practices 1979 (163)

The union however entered a period of internal dispute after 1977 which came to a head with the dismissal of the secretary of the union, Jacob Nthebe, early in 1979. The dispute centred around a struggle between the secretary and the union's Executive Committee. As from March 1979 a new organiser, Angel Makhanya, was employed by the union. She was appointed secretary of the union in July 1979. By this stage the union had left the Consultative Committee and joined FOSATU.

By the end of August 1979 GAWU had a signed up membership of 1200, but paid up membership only stood in the region of 100 to 200. At that stage the union was organising at 16 companies in Pretoria and the East Rand. In the opinion of the union's secretary and president a company was well-organised when all workers would join the union if they were assured there would be no victimisation of members. Notwithstanding the rather hypothetical nature of this criterion, they claimed that four of the companies were well organised. These were Pilkington Brothers, Armourplate Safety Glass, Plate Glass (Wadeville) and Consolidated Glass.

In terms of shopfloor organisation the union had only ten shop stewards in toto in August 1979. This figure does not adequately reflect the extent of representation the union had at the workplace. At Pilkington Brothers and Consolidated Glass GAWU had 100% representation on the works committees, while at Armourplate almost all the elected members on the liaison committee were union members. The union had however not made any headway in gaining recognition from management. It had no access onto any of the plants nor any formal recognition. At Consolidated Glass an informal working relationship existed between the secretary of the union and the personnel manager.

Thus by August 1979 the Glass and Allied Workers Union had not made real gains in shopfloor organisation since the Armourplate strike in 1976. There were several reasons for this, including the detrimental effect of the strike itself. Other contributing reasons were the banning of three UTP officials, the internal dispute between the general secretary and the Executive Committee, as well as a dispute between GAWU on the one hand and the UTP and Consultative Committee on the other hand over whether or not to affiliate to the new federation (FOSATU).

#### 1.8 Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PWAU) (164)

##### History up to Early 1979

The Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union was founded in May 1974. Benjie Mngoma, a founder member of the union who had been working part time for the UTP on the East Rand, became the first general secretary of the union. The union operated from Springs and gained membership at companies such as Bruply, National Veneer Industries, SAPPI (South African Paper and Pulp Industries) and SA Board Mills. By November 1976 signed up membership of the union stood at 967. (165)

In March 1976 the PWAU general secretary approached the management of Bruply about recognition of the union. Management was remarkably forthcoming: while not granting the union full recognition it signed an agreement in which it granted the union certain facilities at Bruply. These included union access to the factory during lunch and other breaks as well as the secretary's involvement in resolving union members' grievances with management. (166)

The approach to Bruply management was however premature in that the union had not yet gained sufficient members at the plant. (167) This subsequently created problems for the union

in 1977. In order to gain more facilities at Bruply the union was required to prove its representativeness. Management insisted that the union should do so by providing it with a list of paid up members of the union. The union was reluctant to do so. On the one hand it feared that its members could be intimidated by middle management who were anti-union, (168) and on the other hand it was reluctant to reveal its limited membership at Bruply to management. (169) Negotiations between the two parties had therefore reached an impasse and the union failed to make headway at Bruply after 1977.

PWAWU also made some headway at two other companies in 1976-77. These were SAPPI, where the general secretary had access to both the plant and management, and National Veneer Industries where management granted the union limited recognition. Around mid-1977 stop order facilities for a funeral benefit scheme administered by Homes Trust was granted by National Veneer Industries. Management also agreed to recognise the union's shop stewards, but the union subsequently failed to exploit this concession.

The lack of progress of PWAWU in 1977 could in part have been due to the banning of three UTP officials, particularly Douwes Dekker, who was playing a valuable and active supporting role to the union.

Another factor that could have contributed to the lack of progress of PWAWU was the conflict it entered into late in 1978 with the Consultative Committee and the UTP. The conflict was over the participation of PWAWU in the feasibility talks to form a new trade union federation. On 30 August 1978 officials and workers of PWAWU, GAWU and the Springs branch of EAWU, attended a meeting to discuss the proposed federation. They voted

unanimously for a regional committee of the proposed federation to be set up in the Transvaal. The following day the general secretaries from the other unions on the Consultative Committee held a meeting where they drafted a statement rejecting any claims that the Consultative Committee was represented at the previous meeting. (170)

The Consultative Committee went further and drafted a letter to the UTP in which it recommended that the UTP should withdraw its services from PWAU, GAWU, and the Springs branch of EAWU 'because they were working against the other unions of the Consultative Committee, they were dividing the membership of the unions and they were frustrating the efforts of UTP to build the unions'. (171)

An extraordinary meeting of the UTP Advisory Committee was called on 15 September to discuss the letter. At the meeting it was reported that the general secretary of PWAU and the president of GAWU were responsible for distributing pamphlets and Mr. Nkabinde of EAWU was approaching members of other unions encouraging them to join the new federation. These and other allegations were referred to the UTP Executive Committee. (172)

After further deliberations the director of UTP wrote a letter to the secretary of PWAU on 28 September giving the union's Executive Committee until 15 October 1978 to meet with the UTP's Committee in order to discuss the following allegations against the union:

- (i) your union is working against the spirit of the other unions associated with UTP;
- (ii) your union is dividing the membership of other unions;
- (iii) your union is distorting the efforts of UTP in assisting trade unions. (173)

However, PWAU's Executive Committee decided not to meet with the UTP Committee. Consequently, on 1 November 1978 the

UTP severed all its ties and withdrew all its services from PWAU. This involved ceasing to pay salary subsidies to the union, refusing it access to UTP premises and stopping all assistance from the UTP. (174)

In the meanwhile PWAU had applied directly for financial support to the international trade secretariat to which it was affiliated, namely the International Federation of Building and Woodworkers. It received R4906 in 1979 which it used on transport costs, office equipment and stationary. The union's own revenue from paid up members in 1979 was totally inadequate to cover its costs. In June and July 1979 it only raised R85 and R116 respectively from subscriptions. The remainder of the union's revenue came from FOSATU which it joined upon its formation in April 1979.

#### PWAU Structure and Practices, 1979

By August 1979 PWAU was no longer serviced by the UTP, but an affiliate of FOSATU. The presentation of the union as it was then is however included in this chapter because it had been associated for most of its history up to that date with the Consultative Committee and the UTP.

PWAU was small, weak and not well organised in August 1979. Its signed up membership stood at 1528, while its paid up membership was not even one-tenth of this. In June and July 1979 85 and 116 members respectively paid their union subscriptions of one rand per month. The union secretary considered a factory to be well organised when union membership had reached 50% and a shop steward committee had been successfully established in that factory. He regarded a factory as poorly organised when the union had less than 10% membership at the factory. By his own criteria the secretary did not regard any factories to be well

organised, fourteen to be poorly organised, and only two, Carlton Papers and Novobord, to be reasonably organised. It is however dubious whether even the reasonably organised factories had any sustained organisation since organisation at Novobord had only commenced two weeks prior to the time the interview was conducted.

Shop stewards, with one exception, were not elected by workers. Instead, the union appointed enthusiastic workers it came across as shop stewards. In August 1979 the union had a total of thirteen shop stewards whose tasks, according to the general secretary, were to collect subscriptions, take up complaints and represent members to management. Given the restricted development of shop stewards it is questionable whether they were in practice performing all three tasks.

No less than 90% of PWAU's membership consisted of migrant workers, the majority of whom lived in hostels. The reason for this, according to the general secretary, was bad working conditions that local permanent residents were not prepared to do. The migrant workers participated more than local residents in the union. This combination of bad working conditions with active migrant workers clustered in hostels may have been major factors responsible for the subsequent revival of the union in the 1980s.

#### 1.9 United African Motor and Rubber Workers of SA (UAM) (175)

In March 1979 Dora Nowatha commenced organising workers into a new union that was to be established in October 1979. At the time the interview was conducted (August 1979) the union had not been formally established yet, but the organisational foundations were being laid. The union's office was in Pretoria.

Understandably, the membership of the union was still small

in August 1979. The union had approximately 100 members at Bosal in two plants in Koedoespoort, and about 20 in Hudson Tyres. Paid up membership in the union was about 80. The secretary was going out to factories almost every day and approached workers before work and at lunch time.

The secretary was an employee of the UAW in Pretoria until she resigned in March 1979 due to a longstanding disagreement between her and Freddie Sauls, general secretary of NUMARWOSA. She approached the UTP for assistance to organise in opposition to the UAW. UTP responded to this request by supplying an organiser, David Letsike, and subsidising all the expenditure of the union including salaries, rent and transport. Voluntary assistance was also given to the union by an employee of the Institute for Industrial Relations, Louis Khumalo.

Nowatha had a strongly articulated black consciousness position. She thought that Whites should concentrate on their own people, the Coloureds on their own, and leave the Africans to do their own thing.

## 2. Analysis of Consultative Committee Unions

### 2.1 Trade Union Democracy

By August 1979 six years had elapsed since the UTP had commenced establishing or reviving trade unions. The unions all went through different phases of development and the aim of this section is to consider how democratic they had become by 1979.

Henry Chipeya, who was president of CCAWUSA in 1979, perceived trade union democracy in terms of locating power or control in the hands of union members. He regarded this as the ultimate aim of the unions serviced by the UTP, but stressed that there could be different ways of going about it and that it was a process that took a long time to develop.

In my union specifically our ultimate aim is to get representation for the different groups or areas on the Executive, and by deciding as the Executive we assume that there are report back meetings to the particular workers represented by that Executive member.

The ultimate aim is to get the feedback to and from the shop floor worker. Probably one could take two basic approaches. One is that you get to the shop worker by discussing things at the Executive and trying to generate some report back mechanism to the workers. On my Executive I have got someone from Edgars, and for some reason or other, we expect that that particular member from Edgars calls general meetings at that particular plant. He gets the feeling of the members about some particular issue being discussed by the Executive and then comes back to the Executive Committee. Now that is getting, in my opinion, to the workers from the Executive. Now there is the other feeling of getting to the workers first and then coming from the workers to the Executive. In my opinion it is a different approach, but with the intention of getting the same result.

I am totally committed to the system the unions are following, not to the practice. Personally I know of course that there is a lot of bureaucracy in some of the unions, but the principle of having the power located in the membership is the correct one being followed. I do not think there is anyone, whether it's in FOSATU or one of our unions, who can claim to be following the principle to the last detail. The main reason for this difference between the principle and the practice is that we are dealing with developing Black trade unions. The members are still in the process of becoming aware of their power as members and in that process, which is a very very long process, the Executive is in a position to make decisions where they don't go back to the members for an opinion. (176)

Thus, according to Chipeya, there was a commitment to democratic workers' control in the unions, but this had not yet been attained by the unions serviced by the UTP. It was still possible for the Executive Committees to concentrate power in their hands by not having to obtain worker approval for decisions taken by the Executive.

It is the case that, as the unions serviced by the UTP developed, power started being shared between the union officials and the Executive Committees. The secretaries especially started being made more accountable to the Executive. However, the unions had not yet developed to a point where power was in

the hands of the rank and file members of the union.

At the time there also did not appear to be a strong commitment to establish democratic workers' control of the unions nor an awareness of what would be required to achieve it within the unions. There was especially not an awareness or desire to build a strong system of worker participation and representation at the work place. Although the Shop Stewards Manual stated that the shop steward was 'the key person to build union strength and solidarity' (177) the unions serviced by the UTP generally did not make strenuous efforts to ensure that shop stewards did play such a key role. While the task of collecting subscriptions by hand, which the shop stewards generally had, was an arduous and unpopular one, such a role was not sufficient to build up democratic practices on the shopfloor. The UTP sustained its educational programmes, but reliance could not be placed on education as a sufficient force to democratise the unions.

By late 1979 the unions serviced by the UTP had therefore not yet attained democratic workers' control of their unions. Instead the unions had developed a tendency towards oligarchy where a few officials and Executive members at the top of the unions were in control. The policy of ensuring African leadership of the unions was therefore not sufficient to ensure that the leaders did not usurp power within the unions. The absence of active workers' participation had implications for the bargaining power which the unions managed to attain.

## 2.2 Strategies for Power

The factors that either strengthened or weakened the bargaining power of the Consultative Committee unions, included

their approach to union organisation and their legal strategies in conflict with management. In addition, from the account of the individual unions, it is clear that the internal conflict within and between the unions weakened the unions as well as the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions as a whole. The reasons why the conflict became so general are therefore also considered.

### Approach to Trade Union Organisation

As in the case of other independent unions, the Consultative Committee unions strove to build up their power base on the shop floor. The most common strategy of the unions was to try and organise union committees which were actually works committees composed entirely of union members. They generally opposed liaison committees, but used them when there was no feasible alternative available. While the unions generally had some shop stewards committees, these did not play a central and crucial role in the union.

SFAWU had seven unionised works committees, five of which they managed to establish in the face of a managerial counter-strategy to create liaison committees instead. The union also had 30 shop stewards at the end of 1978 whose tasks included collecting subscriptions, recruiting new members and taking up complaints where this was possible, but at that stage the union was building its organisational base around the works committees.

While CCAWUSA's constitution did not make any provision for shop stewards or other forms of workplace organisation, the union did have company committees which met fortnightly. Most of them were actually liaison committees with about 80% union representation of the elected members on the liaison committee.

EAWU had 50 shop stewards in August 1979 whose most

important task was to collect subscriptions. They did not take up complaints directly with management. Although they were meant to be elected annually this tended not to happen. One of the union's shop steward committee at a plant in Pretoria did however hold brief weekly meetings.

Similar to EAWU, the 35 shop stewards in the Laundry union were elected for indefinite periods. Their most common role was also collecting subscriptions except for those on committees who took up grievances as well. The shop stewards committees tended to meet three-weekly.

TAWU, on the other hand, had 29 shop stewards in July 1978. They usually met weekly and their responsibilities included promoting union organisation. However, a year later the transport union's shop stewards were not meeting any more. This was most likely due to the internal conflict in the union during that year. SACWU, by contrast, did not put great emphasis on shopfloor organisation because the secretary used the industrial council agent a great deal for such matters as unfair dismissals and pay disputes.

Thus the Consultative Committee unions were trying to use shopfloor organisation to build up their strength in the workplace. They did so primarily by means of statutory works committees. Although these unions were creating shopfloor structures to build up their bargaining power, in practice they did not match this with strong worker participation on the shopfloor as would have been evinced by more frequent meetings of the committees. With one exception I came across, committees were not meeting weekly, but when they did meet regularly it was on a fortnightly or three-weekly basis. There were however many cases where committees were not meeting regularly at all.

By 1979 the unions were therefore generally not building up their power base on the shopfloor effectively and systematically. There was a lack of awareness on the side of many of the union secretaries of the need for frequent and regular meetings of union committees or shop stewards in order to build up union strength at the workplace.

There was thus a close correlation between the Consultative Committee unions' lack of democratic worker participation and their relative weakness on the shopfloor. This was because both shopfloor democracy and power required strong worker participation in the affairs of the unions, but this was still by and large underdeveloped towards the end of 1979.

The Consultative Committee unions also tended to weaken themselves by trying to organise too many factories instead of selecting a small number of strategic companies and trying to organise them well. As a result they only managed to organise a small proportion of factories well. EAWU, for instance, had ten well organised factories in August 1979, but another nine were poorly organised and another twenty to thirty were only in their infancy stage. Although the union was probably trying to make up for the factories it lost by splitting away from the East Rand branch, it was adopting an approach that impeded its ability to organise less factories in-depth and so strengthen their bargaining power. The Laundry union, which only had one organiser in the person of the secretary, was organising no less than 60 companies. Although the secretary regarded a quarter of them to be well organised, it was clearly beyond the capacity of a single person to organise such a large number of companies effectively. The SFAWU secretary similarly regarded the union to have only four well organised plants whereas about twenty companies were reasonably and five poorly organised.

The legal strategy adopted by UTP-serviced unions also conflicted with the creation of a strong shopfloor and mobilisation of workers at the workplace in support of their demands. As had been indicated above, EAWU and GAWU successfully made use of court interdicts on three occasions to challenge the victimisation of union activists by management. This happened at Raleigh Cycles in August 1973, Van Leer in February 1974 and Pilkington Glass in November 1974. On all three occasions the victimised workers were fully reinstated with backpay. The state however found a way of closing off this form of legal action by the unions. But, more importantly, the unions were not utilising their opportunity to build up strength on the shopfloor by mobilising workers around the issues. It also created a legalistic approach amongst workers who developed a misguided and over-optimistic impression of what could be achieved through legal action. Eric Tyacke explained it as follows:

The legal action of course has another unfortunate aspect - that if you are relying on this kind of action it means that the workers are not building up their muscles and they can be inclined to opt for that kind of action as an easy and an effective way out rather than using industrial action, and this is a very unhealthy situation.

I remember for instance in the strike that was held at Armourplate where we went through all the processes of making sure it was going to be a legal strike. Somebody came to me who I am fairly convinced was a sort of advisor and I have a feeling that he influenced them rather heavily in order to make that decisions and he said to me, 'of course they can go to court if they're fired', and I had to say to him 'I'm sorry you can't'. And he got quite a shock - actually a visible shock - because the strike went ahead. (178)

Although the strike was legal, the workers were all dismissed lawfully by management for breach of contract. Some workers may thus have entered the Armourplate strike under the misguided impression that they would be able to take recourse to

a court of law to be reinstated.

#### Conflict within and between the Unions

In section one, it came to light that conflict emerged within no less than four of the Consultative Committee unions after 1977. In addition tensions also arose between two unions on the one side and the remaining Consultative Committee unions and the UTP on the other side. This inner turmoil weakened the unions as well as the Consultative Committee and therefore had a harmful impact on the unions' objective to acquire greater power. Because it weakened trade union power, the reasons for the turmoil in and between the Consultative Committee unions between 1977 to 1979 need to be analysed.

In order to gain an overview of the conflict it is very valuable to start with the analysis of Henry Chipeya who became secretary of the UTP after the bannings in November 1976. From that central position he witnessed the events in the unions from a close vantage point and was thus able to present a general analysis of the causes of the conflict.

According to Chipeya, who was interviewed purely in a personal capacity, a power struggle within the unions was one of the fundamental causes of the conflict. He analysed it as follows:

Basically I believe that there are three power basis within a union. The power of the secretary, the power of the Executive and the power of the membership. Ultimately the power of the membership is the supreme power.

But in the development of the union it almost always starts off with the secretary being the most powerful in terms of running the affairs of the union.

As time goes on the Executive becomes aware of its powers as representatives of the workers and also the powers which should be given to the secretary as an employee of that particular union.

Ultimately the members at the different plants who elect the different people onto the Executive also become aware of their particular powers.

I think these dismissals are as a result of the realisation of the powers of the different groups I have just mentioned. First of all, I will not refer to any specific union, but the position is that the Executive suddenly realised that they had constitutional powers to reprimand the secretary and the secretary suddenly realised that he did not have the powers he always had and used. Obviously he would be on the defensive if any of these powers were to be taken away.

In many cases the move is towards correcting the situation. Now different unions have different feelings and some feel that the situation must be harshly corrected while others feel that it must be quietly corrected. I think where certain secretaries were dismissed it was as a result of the Executive Committee feeling that the secretaries should be harshly reprimanded. (179)

The former secretary of the UTP also thought that another basic cause of the conflict within the unions was due to different ideological approaches to trade unionism. He explained:

I think one could basically say that the Black trade union movement in South Africa is divided into three main ideological groups. The first one is the TUCSA type parallel union, the next one is the Consultative type, to put it in my own words, black consciousness motivated type of union movement, and the third type is the FOSATU type - the belief there I understand is there should be co-operation among all race groups and the best man should be on the top whether that man is white or black. It is quite a different approach from the Consultative type union which basically believes in the co-operation of all groups, but tends to push for the advancement of the leadership powers of the Black even if there does exist a white person who has extraordinary powers compared to the particular Black.

Now naturally when FOSATU emerged, especially in the Transvaal area, we had a different type of thinking being brought into the already established Consultative type thinking. Obviously, I suppose either because of democracy or otherwise, one would expect that certain of the union members would immediately take to that type of thinking. Splits resulted where top officials of the union thought differently about the approach to unionism. This did not come out openly. I have analysed the situation personally and found that one comes out with little arguments like 'he is not working properly', but I think the basic reason for some of these dismissals and divisions is that the people who are involved in these divisions follow two basic trade

union ideologies. (180)

The foregoing analysis of the unions bears out Chipeya's contention that the basic reasons for the conflict within and between the unions were power struggles and ideological differences between the leaders of the unions. However, ideological differences did not exist in all the cases. The conflict in the Transport and Glass unions appeared to be purely power struggles between the secretary and members of the Executive of the unions.

Additional reasons that I would advance as causes of the conflict are regional differences that developed within two of the unions and a power struggle over control of the unions and their resources in all three unions.

Because of the enormity of the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) region, branches in the region developed some autonomy of their own. The East Rand African working class manifested a more militant consciousness than other regions and this influenced the approach that the union leaders adopted towards trade union organisation. The two unions that split, namely the Engineering and Sweet Food unions, both had a large concentration of East Rand membership. Significantly, it was the other two unions from the Consultative Committee that also had large membership in the East Rand, namely the Glass and Paper unions, that came out in favour of FOSATU along with the Engineering and Sweet Food unions. Furthermore, the close proximity of the offices of these unions in Springs meant that they could influence each other and adopt similar political and ideological positions.

A struggle waged within the conflicting unions for control over the resources of the unions, especially the vehicles as well as the financial resources. This also constituted a power

struggle between the leaders in the unions, but not one over organising strategies and political issues. The struggle was over who would have control of the union's resources which, in turn, would have extended the control of one side over the other.

A feature of all the conflicts within the unions, was that they were conflicts between the officials, usually the secretary, and the Executive members of the unions. The rank and file members were not fundamentally involved in the conflicts. They were only called in by the one side or the other when they wanted to strengthen their hand or act constitutionally. The absence of full democratic worker participation and control of the unions thus facilitated the conflict between the secretaries and Executive members within the unions.

## Chapter 10

### The Emergence and Development of FOSATU in the Transvaal from 1974 to 1979

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the historical origin and development of FOSATU in Transvaal up to October 1979. The first and major part of the paper is empirical and contains five sections that more or less present a chronological account of the emergence and development of FOSATU (Transvaal). Each section concentrates on a particular institution. The first section examines the IAS (Industrial Aid Society), the founding organisation, for the period that it was the only, and hence the controlling, body. The second section considers MAWU (the Metal and Allied Workers' Union) which was founded by the IAS up to the time of the devastating Heinemann dispute. The third section analyses the Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand (CIWW) which was designed as a bridgehead between the IAS and MAWU, but also presented its own problems and eventually merged with TUACC (the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council) in Natal. In the fourth section the reconstruction and stabilisation of MAWU is examined while the last major section focuses on FOSATU in the Transvaal region. Its formation, policy, structure, and affiliated unions are analysed.

The second part of the chapter examines the progress FOSATU and its affiliated unions had made by 1979 in the democratisation process and strategies to build up power in the organisation. Since these two objectives were interrelated they are discussed together.

## 1. The Industrial Aid Society (IAS)

### The Founding of the IAS

The IAS was the forerunner to Fosatu in Transvaal. The Inaugural Meeting of its Steering Committee was held on 12 December 1973 and attended by five people. The initiative for the formation of the IAS came from the students' Wages Commission at the University of the Witwatersrand. (1) The Wages Commissions were being co-ordinated by the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) on the university campuses where NUSAS was represented. As a result the IAS included a combination of university students in Wages Commission and former SACTU trade unionists who had gained their experience in the 1950s and 1960s. This was also the case with the organisations emerging in Cape Town and Durban.

However, the IAS was founded after the Durban trade unions unions and the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau (WPWAB) were already in existence. It had contact with both centres and support for the distinctly different organisational approaches between Durban and Cape Town were both present in IAS. Consequently tension and conflict developed within IAS.

The aims of the IAS were very general. Its constitution specified that 'the Society' would 'work towards the improvement of the lot of industrial employees within their work situation' and 'promote a spirit of self-sufficiency and self-reliance among said employees'. The constitutional structure of the IAS was much more akin to that of a social society than a workers' movement. This was partly due to the fact that unanimity did not exist between the members and partly on account of the fact that it was deliberately being cautious because of the repressive South African state. At its Inaugural Meeting the IAS Steering Committee of five members decided to embark upon three projects.

These were a Complaints Service, Literacy Training and workers' education through a Worker Education Group.(2)

For the first fifteen months of its existence, the IAS grew very slowly. After six months its membership stood at 132, it had dealt with 130 complaints and only 15 workers were involved in the Saturday morning training of the Worker Education Group. By the end of September 1974 approximately 50 people were doing literacy training and the IAS had commenced organising and formed works committees at two factories. Worker education was showing a 'remarkable degree of inconsistency' since workers were not attending the course regularly. (3) A month later there was a 'noticeable decrease in complaints of late' and the IAS seemed to be 'in a bit of a downward swing'. A call was made for a seminar at which 'the whole question of IAS direction' could be 'thrashed out - organisational strategy, attitudes to unionisation, whether to concentrate on one industry or not'.(4)

In part the problem at that stage was the organisational strategy of the IAS. Instead of building up solid factory organisation at a few factories in one area where it had good contacts, it enlisted the Wages Commission students in pamphleteering a wide range of factories spread over the Witwatersrand.(5) It also tried to enrol members into a Benefit Society and laboured for the first few months on its constitution. In this strategy it was trying to follow the lead given by the Durban General Factory Workers Benefit Fund which had grown rapidly and acquired thousands of members. An abrupt end was put to this strategy when police raided the Durban Benefit Fund in May 1974 on the ground that it was not registered. (6) The state subsequently prosecuted officials of the fund for running an illegal Benefit Fund.

Within the IAS there was also a strong feeling that the organisation had a structural problem. There was 'a feeling of not getting far with the education and that the Steering Committee was not democratic. Workers on the Committee were not properly representing anybody'.(7) The structural problem was the co-existence of the Steering Committee and the Worker Education Group with only two people 'who had any links between the two committees'. Matters would be discussed in the Worker Education Group 'and then we'd send through recommendations to the Steering Committee which had ultimate control. Nothing would happen about them. We felt that we couldn't get anywhere unless we had the IAS structure sorted out'.(8)

A position paper on this and other problems was finally drafted by a member of the Worker Education Group in February 1975. It was remarkably frank:

My major proposition is that the undefined relationship between the [Steering-JM] Committee and the Worker Education Group is the source of our immobility. While the Committee exists as the executive of the IAS, it functions more as a nominal body which merely ratifies certain of the decisions of the education group... The decisions of the IAS are actually made by the Education Group - the Committee functions as a token body which is a convenient facade of 'black' initiative. We must acknowledge that reality...The Worker Education Group can never be sure that its decisions, no matter how urgent, will be acted on. The Committee, on the other hand, has no knowledge of the validity of the propositions presented to it. (9)

As a result he proposed that the division between the Steering Committee and the Education Group should be scrapped and that a single Executive Committee be formed instead. This proposal was subsequently accepted at a joint meeting of all the groups involved in IAS.(10)

## The Industrial vs General Union Debate

At the same time another debate was being carried on in the IAS. It was of such a fundamental nature that it waged fiercely for 4 to 5 months in the IAS although it was present in embryo from the beginning.(11) The debate centred around the organisational direction the IAS should take. Although a number of interrelated issues were being fought over, the basic issue was the political direction of the IAS. The differences crystallised over whether the IAS should organise an industrial or a general union.

One aspect of the debate over which consensus could be reached, was the structural relationship between the IAS and a new union. The position paper by Chris Albertyn analysed this issue very soundly. He started off by pointing out that neither the Steering Committee nor the Worker Education Group were representative bodies and that 'to pretend that the Committee is a body of worker representatives is part of the facade'. As a result he argued that

worker representatives must not be included on the Steering Committee - they must be established within a trade union executive which increasingly takes over the functions which are presently exercised by the Steering Committee. In this way the executive functions of worker organization can be transferred from the Steering Committee to the trade union executive without any possibility of workers being faced with a number of unrepresentative individuals on their own executive committee.

The Steering Committee (the IAS Executive -JM) is defined specifically as an interim body: it will function until all executive functions have been assumed by the newly-constituted unions. The only justification for its existence is that it form unions which become self-sustaining. (12)

The paper validly foresaw that

As power is gradually handed to the trade union executives the Steering Committee (the IAS Executive - JM) will become the educational wing of the trade unions. It will therefore be subject to the control of the trade union executive.

These proposals were also agreed to by the IAS and the newly composed Executive Committee contained the active members from the Steering Committee, Worker Education Group and Literacy Coordinators, but no worker representatives.(13) The new draft constitution of the IAS also specified that powers of the Executive Committee would gradually be transferred to a Shop Stewards Committee at the request of the latter Committee. Then, 'at a time deemed correct' by the Shop Stewards Committee, the Executive Committee 'shall dissolve itself, and hand over all executive powers and duties to the Shop Stewards Committee'.(14)

While subsequent events did not follow the route foreseen by the IAS, the principles adopted by it turned out to be extremely important in eventually eliminating the power of the IAS to control an emerging trade union. However, a very tough debate was first to ensue on the type of union that was to be set up.

The debate which had many dimensions to it, focussed on whether to form an industrial or a general union. One group supported the formation of an industrial metal union working closely with TUACC's Metal and Allied Workers Union(MAWU), while the other group supported the formation of a general union with a different organisational approach.

The argument in favour of a general union approach was that an industrial union would become economistic especially if it followed TUACC's policy, and that it easily led to bureaucratisation. A general union, it was argued, was inherently political. It was also feared that a trade union, without the guidance of a political party, would fall prey to reformism. To overcome this worker education was considered to be of the utmost importance to ensure that an appropriate worker consciousness was developed before trade union structures came

into existence.(15)

The arguments in favour of an industrial union was that there was a tendency within a general union to move rapidly away from the workplace and to lose sight of those issues. A general union also had a tendency to recruit members at random and could have difficulty building up sufficient strength in any one sector.(16) It was furthermore argued that a sound way of organising could prevent industrial unions from becoming non-political and reformist.

There were also arguments specifically put forward in favour of organising an industrial metal union working closely with TUACC's MAWU. Alpheus Mthethwa, general secretary of Mawu, was already organising Leyland up on the Rand and he strongly advocated that the IAS should work at establishing a Transvaal branch of MAWU. These members of IAS were influenced by the fact that TUACC already had a substantial and strong organisation off the ground. Another very important fact was the enormous size of the metal industry on the Witwatersrand and that a metal union would be able to organise a very substantial proportion of African workers in the region. (17)

The debate between the two groups became increasingly fierce as a power struggle developed between them and other issues became tied up in the struggle as well. The ferocity of the debate was reflected in the stormy passage that the proposals had through the Executive Committee. At a meeting attended by Alpheus Mthethwa on 22 March 1975 it was decided by a majority vote 'to set up union structures in the field of metal' and to appoint an organiser and secretary. Mthethwa indicated that Mawu's executive was willing to pay for the organiser of a Metal union who concentrated exclusively on the metal industry, thereby lending more weight to the side favouring an industrial metal

union.

This decision unleashed the conflict between the two groups within the IAS. At the very next meeting of the Executive Committee with packed attendance the chairman called on the Executive to review the previous decision because it 'was the cause of a rift in the IAS which could be avoided by revoking it and coming to a decision agreeable to both sides'.(18) The compromise proposal that was put forward was based on the argument that the IAS 'couldn't simply set up a structure without having functioning committees which would control the structure'. (19)

The proposal, which was accepted nem con, still favoured the industrial metal union supporters. It stipulated that the formation of a union should be delayed until there were five shop steward committees functioning and that disagreement in approach and strategy should be discussed with Durban. A Metal Wing of about 5 Executive members was constituted. It included Siphokubheka as full time organiser in the metal industry, Gavin Anderson and Pindile Mfeti. An earlier intention to organise the furniture industry as well, was reconfirmed at the meeting.

However, the matter was far from settled. It came to the fore again when it was proposed at an IAS Executive meeting on 14 June 1975 to drop the idea of organising the furniture industry. The question was then raised whether to organise in another industry or not. One group supported organising a transport and general union while another favoured the concentration of all the resources exclusively in metal and allied. This matter was considered to be of such importance that position papers were to be drawn up for an Executive meeting two weeks later. At that meeting it was decided after extensive discussions to devote all

the resources for the next 3 months to the metal and allied industry.(20)

Another matter became embroiled in the conflict at the same meeting when questions were raised about the Literacy account. A meeting was called for two days hence to discuss the questions. This started to bring matters to a head. Although the meeting was called to discuss Literacy one member insisted that the Executive should consider his proposal in order to avert a split in the organisation because 'for the last few months there had been two distinct groups within the IAS'.(21) His proposal was that the decision taken two days earlier should be reversed, a transport and general union set up, and that two organisers and an office should be devoted to it. The enormity of the proposal was too much for the meeting to stomach, and it was decided to meet the following morning at 6.30 am to discuss the proposals 'after sleeping on the matter'.(22)

At the early morning meeting the following day the proposal that a transport and general union should be set up was thrashed through. The discussion was characterised by a lack of trust between the two groups and, at one stage, 'a fairly acrimonious exchange' took place. Proposals were finally put forward that won majority support. They were that any decision whether to go into another industry was to be delayed for two weeks, that a paper on the strategical reasons for going into another industry had to be drawn up, and that an investigation into the financial plausibility of such a step had to be conducted.(23)

The intense dispute between the two groups came to an end when one of the strong supporters of the transport and general union was expelled from his IAS post in connection with the financial control of the Literacy account. Other supporters of a transport and general union thereupon also left the IAS. They

were mainly students who withdrew the Wages Commission's services thereby effectively ending student involvement in the IAS. This brought the first intense power struggle within the IAS over its organisational direction to an end. The group supporting the formation of an industrial metal union working in close co-operation with TUACC and MAWU in Natal had won the battle. This was not the last time a conflict was fought over the organisational policy and direction of the emerging institutions. The matter was however sufficiently settled for the Metal Wing of the IAS to commence organising metal workers without interruption.

#### Evaluation of IAS Activities up to July 1975.

The IAS was slow in getting off the ground in the first 18 months of its existence. It had a very low membership, sporadic attendance at its education course, and was without any factory organisation of any note. Why was this the case?

To some extent the answer has to be located in factors external to the IAS. The state's repression of SACTU in the 1960s destroyed independent and progressive African trade unions on the Witwatersrand. Such repressive state action instilled fear of trade unions in many African workers.

It was with this historical awareness that the IAS was founded and with the knowledge that the state was still as repressive as before. The founders also knew that capital was hostile to African worker organisation. Unlike Durban the Witwatersrand had not experienced a wave of strikes that had raised worker consciousness to the level where they would spontaneously join worker organisations.

The founders of the IAS subsequently followed the more

cautious route adopted in Cape Town, namely to set up an intermediate organisation that could serve as a vehicle to build up the worker movement to a point where it could acquire a life of its own. But why did it take so long to acquire a life of its own?

The answer to this is partly due to the region in which the IAS commenced organising. It tried to organise in Johannesburg which, according to Taffy Adler, has historically been harder to organise than the East Rand. Soweto was more dispersed, culturally and socially more heterogeneous, and with a different political tradition from East Rand townships which were more clearly working class in their orientation. Soweto also did not have the same concentration of hostel complexes where migrant workers could be organised more readily. (24)

But the reason for the slow organisational start of the IAS also lay in part in the social composition of the dominant members on its committees. The initial structure of the IAS consisted of a Steering Committee and a number of sub-committees the most important of which was the Worker Education Group. The Steering Committee had a majority of Africans from working class background whereas the larger Worker Education Group consisted of middle class intellectuals who were also White. The structural problem contained in that situation was that the Steering Committee ended up ratifying decisions taken by the Worker Education Group even though executive powers were constitutionally supposed to be vested in the Steering Committee.

After the reform of the IAS structure in February 1975 the Executive Committee was overwhelmingly composed of academics from the University of the Witwatersrand. Although they shared a commitment to building a democratic worker movement, their academic and White middle class backgrounds provided obstacles to

this objective. They lacked experience in worker organisation and tended to be far too theoretical and academic in their approach.(25) As a result they placed too much emphasis on the role of education and too little on organisation. This was particularly the tendency on the part of the 'general union group', but a similar emphasis existed on the part of the 'industrial union group'.

They also relied far too heavily on high-powered intellectual debates amongst themselves to resolve issues and make policy decisions. This had the effect of removing themselves and becoming remote from African workers and their representative leaders. Siphso Kubheka, a former African worker who had been a clerk before and was educated up to standard 9 became an organiser in the Metal Wing of the IAS. On the general versus industrial union debate he subsequently said:

I had difficulties there because the debate was at a high level with some Wits students and lecturers there. The debate was very complicated for me. I had difficulties understanding everything. It was a matter of not knowing what was happening. (26)

While there was a place and need for sound intellectual analysis and leadership in the IAS which the academics and students were well-placed to provide, they placed an excessive emphasis on intellectualism. It had the effect of reinforcing a mental-manual division between themselves and African workers. The African organisers's comments on his experience as an organiser in IAS are informative:

I gained a lot of experience, but that experience wasn't enough because intellectuals there were actually trying to dominate the whole thing. The White intellectuals had a problem that one can understand - they wanted to be counted in the struggle. The way they were brought up was a completely wrong way: a way of feeling superior and a way of being dominant in some kind of debates. They actually wanted to work for the people, thinking for the people, not actually think with the people. That was the main problem. (27)

The first 18 months in the IAS thus constituted a learning period for the white middle class lecturers and students in terms of how to engage with African workers in the process of building a democratic and viable trade union movement.

Finally, an excessive amount of time and energy was also spent by the two groups of intellectuals on fighting over the political direction of the IAS and other interwoven issues. Neither of the two groups were representative of workers and the conflict became a straight power struggle between them. Once the struggle was resolved in July 1975 organisation in the metal industry got under way.

## 2. The Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU), Transvaal Branch

### 2.1 Origins of MAWU

The members of the Metal Wing of the IAS started visiting four to five factories regularly on a weekly basis 'trying to develop the organisation of the shop floor to the stage where the committee we were meeting with was representative of the workers in that factory'.(28) The experience gained by TUACC in Natal and passed on to the Metal Wing was of value at this stage.

The first factories on which organisational work commenced were Leyland which was a heritage of Alpheus Mthethwa's efforts, Heckett, Dunswart, Craft Engineering, Metal Rolling, and Cassel and Cassel(C&C). Organisation on Heinemann commenced a few months later. Gavin Anderson and Sipho Kubheka were the two organisers who concentrated on Heinemann with Pindile Mfeti making a valuable contribution even though he was not doing much organising. It was felt that 'He taught most of us how to speak to workers, how to put issues and things like that.'(29)

Anderson believed that the Metal Wing made mistakes in its

organisational strategies during the early days. He gave an example of two such mistakes at Leayland. The first was to pamphleteer outside the factory which alerted management against the union, while the second was to organise too much around one worker in the plant. In this case it was a particularly bad mistake because it became apparent after four months of organising that he was a management informer. At Heckett a more subtle error was made. The organisers concentrated specifically on very bad working conditions within the factory, but there was no emphasis on the long term goals of the union. The result was that once considerable back pay was won for the workers they did not seem to have any more need for the union although they did carry on belonging. (30)

In September 1975 it was felt that there was strong enough organisation and representation to elect the first Branch Executive Committee (BEC). This was also the time that the Transvaal branch of MAWU was formally constituted. With that the Worker Education Group also had to engage in a 'massive reorientation' of its course towards shop steward and BEC courses.(31)

Shopfloor organisation continued for the remainder of 1975. According to Anderson this enabled more representative worker leaders to emerge. The organisers started realising that workers had elected older respected workers onto the first BEC. They were not strongly organising their fellow workers nor were they taking decisions on the BEC. They were under the impression that they were to be told by the organisers what to do rather than to control the organisers. As organisation became more rigorous more representative leaders started to emerge and come onto the BEC. By about February 1976 a reasonably autonomous BEC existed.(32)

Although the organisers had a strong commitment to democratic worker participation they were in positions of leadership and took initiatives at times. (33) It is in this context that the formation of a Shop Stewards Council early in 1976 has to be seen. All the shop stewards and their alternates in every organised factory belonged to the Council which met for the first time in February 1976. According to Gavin Anderson, the Shop Stewards Council debated a number of strategic issues such as their approach to liaison committees and works committees, whether to organise foreign or South African firms and what to do about the enormous Dunswart plant. Guidelines were given to the BEC which was responsible for implementing those decisions.

But the Shop Stewards Council's first meeting was also its last. It was due to meet again in four months' time, but the June 16th uprising 'blew things apart completely'. (34) In the interim the Heinemann dispute also took place creating a troubled period for the union.

### **The Heinemann Dispute**

Heinemann Electric in Elandsfontein, Germiston, was 70% owned by Barlow Rand and employed about 600 African workers. The organisation of Heinemann, which was commenced in October 1975, was done extremely thoroughly. The initial members were recruited very carefully - a new member would be recruited only if there was unanimity amongst existing members to do so. The first committee workers elected was deliberately not called the shop stewards committee, but a Heinemann organising committee. Very intensive organisation took place not only in the factory, but also in the townships. The organisers met three times a week

with Heinemann workers. On Monday they would meet with the organising committee, on Friday with new union members, and on Saturday a general factory meeting in the township. Major decisions were not taken by the organising committee before it had referred decisions back to the departments in the factory and to the township committees. They decided not to demand union recognition from the company until 75% of the workers were unionised.(35)

The first action as a result of the union's organisation was when many members of the liaison committee resigned early in January 1976 on the grounds that it was an ineffective body. Management called another election for a liaison committee on 26 January. Workers demonstrated their preference for the union by boycotting the election: only 27 of the 606 workers voted.(36) By the end of January the union membership stood at 484, more than 75% of the workforce. Heinemann workers then instructed their union officials to open negotiations with management.

As a result union officials met with the managing director, Mr. W. Wilckens, on 20 February, and presented him with a petition signed by 480 workers. The petition read: 'We the workers of Heinemann Electric wish to state that we are members of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (Transvaal) and that we reject works and liaison committees. We want the union to represent us and not a works or liaison committee.' (37)

'At that stage began the real battle between management and the union.'(38) Management tried its utmost to foist a liaison committee on the African workers. The day after union officials saw Mr. Wilckens, management instituted the election of a liaison committee again. On this occasion only 9 workers voted. One of the organisers commented later: 'I don't think they realised the amount of organisation in the factory. They thought it was

accidental. They kept on trying to buy off people and intimidate people. It never worked.'(39)

Management repeatedly attempted to force a liaison committee or some variant thereof onto the workers. They approached a group of 40 African workers whom they claimed to be representative of African workers and in favour of a liaison committee; they called in three officials from the Steel and Engineering Industrial Federation of SA (SEIFSA) who tried to persuade workers at a mass meeting to accept a liaison committee; when the workers elected an ad hoc committee of 16 members to represent them, management tried to use the committee to its own end by getting its members to distribute pamphlets in favour of management's latest proposal, a 'management-worker committee', which was simply a variation of a liaison committee. On 17 March elections were held for this committee. In spite of vigorous efforts on the part of management to get workers to vote, only 3 out of the 606 African workers cast their votes.(40)

Frustration had already started to build up amongst the workers at management's obdurate unwillingness to recognise their representatives. At a mass meeting on 10 March Mr. Wilckens addressed workers on the virtues of a liaison committee and then closed the meeting before any questions could be asked. More than half of the workers thereupon followed him to his office and appealed vociferously for the recognition of their union. This carried on for a considerable period in the afternoon until shop stewards called on workers to disperse.(41)

After that incident management went on the offensive against the union. Management started moving round the departments and 'trouble-makers' were pointed out to them by the foremen.(42) Shop stewards were moved out of their departments and isolated

from other workers. For reasons that were not explained, police came on the factory premises between Monday, 22 March, and Thursday, 25 March. Their presence understandably heightened tension within the factory.(43)

Then, on Thursday afternoon, management dismissed 20 workers including 3 shop stewards 10 minutes before the factory closed for the day. The reasons advanced were 'a general reduction in staff', even though several new workers had been hired over the preceding two days. Workers immediately held a meeting outside the factory gates and interpreted the firing as victimisation. They decided to have a meeting with the managing director the following morning.

When workers returned to Heinemann the following morning they found one of the gates locked and the other only partially open with factory management and some police at the entrance. They gathered outside the factory gates and requested to meet Mr Wilckens to discuss the previous day's dismissals. They were informed he was not there. The Bakelite department workers, who had come to work earlier at 6.00 am, thereupon came out of the factory and indicated that they also wished to speak to Mr Wilckens. After a while Mr van Lieres, the factory manager came out and said that everybody had to return to work without delay and stop causing trouble. The workers reiterated their wish to speak to Mr. Wilckens and remained outside. (44) A few minutes later the workers were told through a megaphone that they had all been dismissed and could reapply for their jobs on Monday.

The organisers then arrived and offered to help Mr. van Lieres by talking to everybody, but he refused their offer. They nonetheless addressed workers outside the factory and urged them to remain calm. A while later they all adjourned to Alexandra

where they decided to return on Monday and again call for a meeting to urge management to recognise their union.

Over the weekend very intensive township meetings were held. Each township was divided into area committees with one large central area committee for all the townships. All the issues were discussed with workers in small groups and they confirmed their previous decision. (45)

On Monday morning the workers arrived at Heinemann in order to speak to Mr. Wilckens. They found the gates locked and a larger number of police armed with batons and pick handles. Again workers were told that Mr. Wilckens was not there and the attempts of the organisers to get some talks going with Mr. van Lieres failed. At 9.30 am Mr. van Lieres told the workers that they had half an hour in which to fetch their leave pay and UIF cards. None of the workers responded.

At 10.00 am Colonel F.S.Botha who was in charge of the police force, told the workers they had a half an hour in which to disperse or else he would disperse them.(46) Police pick-up trucks started to arrive and police dogs were let out. The tension rose dramatically. It became clear to the organisers that the workers had not understood the police colonel's statement, but they were hemmed in by the police and could not speak to the workers. At 10.20 Sipho Kubheka managed to get through the police cordon and advise workers to depart with dignity.(47) Workers agreed with this and started to move off singing "Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika". The time was about 5 minutes before 10.30.

The 40 policemen thereupon launched a baton charge on the dispersing workers. The police rained blows indiscriminately on the crowd. A reporter who witnessed the scene described it as

follows:

Police hit everybody and everything before them. Several people were bitten by dogs.

A woman, about 7 months pregnant, was one of the victims. A policeman armed with stick resembling a pick handle hit her all over her body. She lay still.

Mr. Gavin Anderson was standing next to me. All of a sudden, a number of police were raining blows on him. He fell and couldn't rise. More blows rained on him. He had to be lifted to his feet; then he was led away into one of three police trucks. (48)

After the baton charge 28 people were treated in hospital and Gavin Anderson, who was under arrest, was detained in hospital and treated for a broken elbow. As a result the union immediately lay charges for wrongful and unlawful assault against the Minister of Police. It took more than three and a half years for the case to get onto the court roll, but the Minister settled out of court at the last minute. A sum of over R21 000 was paid by the state in damages to the injured people as well as legal costs in excess of R10 000. (49)

The state on the other hand charged Siphon Kubheka and Gavin Anderson with inciting a strike and with obstructing the police in their duty. Four ex-Heinemann workers were also arrested and charged under the Rioutous Assemblies and other Acts, but were found not guilty. Messrs Kubheka and Anderson were found guilty of instigating employees to strike and received light sentences.

One organiser felt that although the dispute ended in an immediate defeat for the union, it was a victory for workers in the long run because

workers showed no matter what pressure was directed against them by management and the state they were still prepared to stand for a union right up to the end. Battles like that demonstrated quite forcibly that the state had to come to terms with unions for African workers. (50)

But the reality was that the Heinemann dispute had destroyed union organisation at the factory. This was a definite loss to the union

in that up to then there was a very strong and vibrant factory committee holding three meetings each week and raising subscriptions of R600 a month from that one factory. They were influencing all the factories in that area and in the union Heinemann workers were known for taking a very clear position on everything and having a very sound way of tackling difficulties. So when that was lost it certainly was a big blow for all of us. (51)

The Heinemann dispute was also detrimental to more general union organisation in MAWU because the organisers had to spend three weeks on daily preparation for the court case. This required a great deal of their time and energy and the organisers could thus not give their full attention to organising the other factories.

The student revolt of 16 July 1976 in Soweto and the events following in its wake administered a further blow to the union. Organisers could not get to the factories and found themselves crippled from June till October. Added to this the Kombi used for organising was stolen in September.

Towards the end of 1976 all factory organisation of MAWU had therefore almost completely collapsed after making a promising start. In spite of that, the founding of MAWU was of immense significance in that a successful start had been made in the creation of a trade union. The IAS was achieving what it had initially set out to do: it had founded a worker organisation in the form of a trade union based on sound structures and practices incorporating active shop floor participation and worker representation in the union.

However the union had been severely weakened by the inexperience of the organisers who had not yet learned how to be 'managers of discontent', (52) i.e. how to channel the conflict inherent in a situation and to contain it sufficiently to ensure an advance for the union and the workers concerned. Instead of

ending up stronger than before, the union was severely weakened by the Heinemann dispute.

There were also other events happening at about the same time in MAWU. The policy-makers in the union were at loggerheads with the IAS and this dispute led to the formation of an additional institution.

### 3. The Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand

#### 3.1 The Dispute Between MAWU and the IAS

The basis of the dispute between MAWU and the IAS rested on the fact that MAWU was trying to establish its autonomy from IAS, but the IAS was trying to retain its traditional role of deciding over all matters including union organisation. Having given birth to the union, the IAS found it difficult to accept the reality that its offspring wanted to assert its independence from its parent body.

Strictly speaking the conflict was not a straight fight between MAWU and the IAS because the chairman and secretary of the IAS supported the union organisers on this issue.

From the point of view of the union organisers, they felt that the IAS wanted to have a say over the union, but the organisers wanted to ensure that the workers retained a say over their own affairs. The organisers would have preferred to let workers take the decisions even if they were wrong ones. In that way workers could learn from their mistakes.

The union organisers felt that the involvement of the IAS in union affairs removed worker control of union matters and placed them in the hands of outside experts. They would have preferred workers to take decisions themselves over the budget rather than presenting them with a prepared package as was the practice since the IAS was responsible for the union's finances. They feared that what happened with the Heinemann legal cases would happen to

the union as well. The assistance of the IAS was requested in fighting the legal cases. The IAS did assist, but within a month the union no longer knew what was happening with the Heinemann cases. This was because lawyers were handling the case and were taking many decisions that the organisers believed to be the preserve of the BEC. Rightly or wrongly, the organisers attributed this loss in union participation to the IAS. (53)

From the side of the IAS the Executive members felt excluded from the affairs of the union and they wished to have some contact with workers. The IAS performed all the administrative functions of the union particularly fund raising from Overseas and links with other worker organisations in the country.

The conflict between the MAWU organisers and IAS executive was also a conflict over who controlled the union because the MAWU organisers had effective control over internal matters of the union. The IAS exercised an external control over the union through financial control. There was also discontent within the ranks of the IAS that they should have such powers as an unrepresentative minority grouping of mainly university lecturers.(54)

As a result of IAS control over the union, there was an attempt on the part of the union's policy-makers to divorce the two organisations. People in the IAS wanted to avoid it so they suggested setting up what they termed a 'bridging committee' in order to mediate between the two and to regulate the relationship between them. (55) The bridging committee was called the Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand (CIWW) when it came into existence.

### 3.2 The Structure and Role of CIWW

CIWW was founded in September 1976. There was considerable dispute over representation on the Council. Although the IAS constituted an unrepresentative minority grouping it was reluctant to relinquish its power and wanted equal representation with the union. The union was opposed to this, insisting on majority representation. The union did in fact manage to gain a majority, but ironically this did not weaken the power of former IAS personnel who became CIWW officials. Due to personal relations they were able to obtain majority support on issues in CIWW which they could not formerly achieve. The Council consisted of the IAS Executive Committee and the union BEC in order to give the union majority representation. The union also had majority representation on the Secretariat, which was the Council's executive body (and elected by Council). The constitution of CIWW was based on the constitution of TUACC in Natal in the hope that it would extend to other trade unions as well.(56)

The formation of CIWW did not end the conflict between MAWU and the IAS. It was only the banning in November 1976 of Kubheka and Anderson, the two MAWU organisers, that brought an end to hostilities because it 'removed the power element'.(57) This provided some of the IAS Executive members with the opportunity to assume offices in MAWU, but it generated resentment amongst members of the BEC who felt that they had imposed themselves from outside. This resentment lasted amongst longstanding BEC members and surfaced from time to time for a number of years afterwards. (58)

CIWW took over most of the functions previously performed by the IAS. Fund raising, administration, the maintenance of vehicles, and education were all taken over. The IAS carried on

with a legal service and literacy training. It subsequently introduced a new medical service, particularly in Workman's Compensation cases, with the aid of a few doctors. (59)

This development marked a significant reduction in the power of the IAS to control the affairs of the union. The real powers of the IAS had been transferred to CIWW which had MAWU representatives serving on its Council and Executive. Although CIWW was a structural advance over the IAS it was still a body superimposed on the IAS and MAWU. In its report for the first 6 months of 1977 it stated that CIWW 'acts as the controlling and coordinating body of the IAS and the Transvaal branch of MAWU'.(60) The control exercised by CIWW over the union was quite farreaching. The CIWW Secretariat 'tended to operate as the executive of the union' and it appointed union organisers.(61)

But there were limits to the control that CIWW could exercise over the union especially after it had reconsolidated itself again after mid-1977. The two major controversial issues that CIWW dealt with in 1978 were over the establishment of a general union and the Medical Scheme. Although CIWW took the final decisions on these two issues, one was 'fought in the arena of the MAWU BEC'.(62) while the other one was effectively taken by MAWU shop stewards. (63) What gave the CIWW Secretariat its power was the fact that it assumed certain crucial functions, namely centralised fundraising and contact with Overseas organisations.(64)

### 3.3 Evaluation of CIWW

The formation of CIWW was premature. According to Taffy Adler, secretary and co-founder of CIWW, 'it was premature in the

sense that there was a massive structure which wasn't justified'.

(65) It was set up as a Council of industrial workers of the Witwatersrand when it only had one trade union in its fold. At the first round of federation talks (that eventually led to the formation of FOSATU) in March 1977 it had difficulty justifying its presence at the conference since it represented only one trade union that was also present.

CIWW was both a step backward and a step forward in the democratisation of the and its relationship with MAWU, or, to put it differently, in the transformation of the institutional relationship into a labour movement. It was a step backwards in that CIWW constituted a structure that was superimposed onto the IAS and MAWU. It was a bureaucratic and hierarchical body that exercised control from above that were properly the preserve of the union's executive. The Council and Secretariat included members who were not representing anybody but themselves and their own interests, but were taking decisions affecting the union.

On the other hand, the formation of CIWW has to be seen in the context of its time. The IAS had successfully nurtured the formation of a metal union which grew in strength until the setbacks it received after the Heinemann dispute which weakened and destabilised the union considerably. Although committed to the growth of a democratic labour movement the IAS still performed various vital functions for MAWU and exercised considerable power, especially through financial control, which it was unwilling to relinquish. However, it may be a debatable question whether MAWU had the capacity to perform those functions by itself. CIWW, as a bridging organisation between the IAS and MAWU, stripped the IAS of its financial control and power. By gaining majority representation on both the Council and

Secretariat the union could potentially gain control over its own affairs on these bodies although the intellectual skills of the IAS representatives on CIWW would have given them a considerable advantage over the BEC representatives on these two bodies. Nonetheless the formal structures of CIWW had in fact succeeded in eliminating the control that the IAS had over the union.

CIWW reconstituted itself on 30 July 1978 as the Transvaal branch of TUACC with TUACC thereby becoming a national co-ordinating council of trade unions with a National Executive Committee (NEC). This flowed quite naturally out of the close relationships that existed between CIWW and TUACC. Fund raising had already become a joint venture between them.(66) The merger also took place to sort out certain anomalies that had developed. The two metal unions had simply been two loose branches. Thus a national metal union was also formed. MAWU in Transvaal had in the meanwhile been regenerating and consolidating itself again.

#### 4. MAWU from 1977 to 1979

##### 4.1 Overview of the Period

After the Heinemann dispute in March 1976, the Soweto uprising on 16 July, an internal struggle for control between MAWU organisers and the IAS, the theft of the Kombi used for organising in September, and the October banning of two leading organisers of MAWU, the union was extremely weak towards the end of 1976. Virtually all the factories it had organised up to then had collapsed or did so during 1977. Only Craft Engineering sustained organisation up to the end of 1979.

As a result MAWU commenced with a period of reconstruction of the union in 1977. For the following three years up to the end of 1979 the union consolidated and stabilised its organisation at a relatively small number of factories. In

September 1979 it was organising 18 factories of which 11 had continuous representation on the BEC.(67) In the opinion of John Stanwix, who was general secretary of the union from August 1978 onwards, the union approached industrial conflict cautiously because its organisation was deemed to be 'flimsy' over this period. (68) It did not have a policy against strikes, but was reluctant to enter into a strike. Although industrial conflict could arise spontaneously, it is interesting to note that there were only a few brief work stoppages and one strike in the union's organised factories up to the end of 1979.

Although MAWU had consolidated itself and stabilised the BEC and shop stewards committees by the end of the period under consideration, it had bureaucratized itself considerably in the process as well. While the BEC displayed some independence in decision-making, the initiative and drive still came from the union's organisers.

Over this period MAWU struggled with some success for the right to organise at factories and the recognition of the union and workers' representatives, the shop stewards, by management. At the end of the period the union's presence was well-established at a number of factories and it was on the verge of signing its first recognition agreement with Tensile Rubber as an unregistered union. The union had laid itself a sound foundation.

In order to give substance to this overview, it is necessary to consider aspects of MAWU's organisation in more detail.

## **4.2 MAWU in Action: A Detailed Analysis**

### **Factory Organisation**

At the beginning of 1977 MAWU's organisation lay shattered. Organisers proceeded to make contact with the 'old' factories

formerly organised by the union as well as 'new' factories. (69) The old factories with two exceptions, namely Craft Engineering and C&C (Cassel & Cassel), quickly collapsed completely. C&C was sporadically organised, but gradually died.(70)

Membership figures and subscriptions were commensurately low. In May 1977 the union's signed up membership stood at 446 (71) while subscriptions amounted to only R189. (72) Overseas funds became available during that time and two new vehicles were bought which facilitated organisation.

The method of factory organisation adopted by MAWU was to recruit and consolidate membership at a factory before approaching management. Once there was sufficient membership, worker representatives (shop stewards) would be elected democratically and given intensive training. The union was reluctant to take up individual grievances until organisation was established. The policy was to concentrate on fewer factories and to consolidate shop floor based organisation factory by factory. The organising strategy, according to the union secretary, was aimed towards gaining recognition as an interim stage in union organisation in order to secure a basis for advancing the struggle. (73)

Union organisers commenced to select their factories more carefully and built up factories in Kew to such an extent that an office was opened up in the area in June 1977. (74) Kew became the most important and active branch for a time as workers streamed into the office. (75) Two important factories that became well organised during 1978 were Tensile Rubber and Toyota. The union commenced with a 'reorganisation' of Tensile Rubber in February and by September it was reorganised very well. (76) At the same time Toyota had strong shopfloor organisation, but

management resolutely refused to deal with the union. (77)

Likewise organisation in Benoni got off the ground. At Light Castings, a foundry with 'rough' management employing contract workers who resided in hostels, the union had managed to obtain a works committee.(78) Vosa Valves, a Stewards and Lloyds company which strongly favoured liaison committees, was 'very well organised' early in 1978.(79) In March its management met with two union organisers and agreed to a very limited recognition of the union. Although the company retained its liaison committee, it agreed to recognise MAWU as 'one legitimate channel of communication between management and the black workers' and that MAWU would be free to recruit members and organise in the company. Vosa management was also prepared to receive and consider representations by the shop stewards and union officials.(80) This opened the way for shop stewards to meet regularly with management.(81)

By the time the 1978 Annual General Meeting was held, the union could claim 4 factories in Kew and 5 in Benoni which had 'fairly well organised shop floors with shop steward committees and BEC members'.(82) The remaining four were in the vicinity of Jan Smuts airport.

Subscriptions had commensurately risen with the revival of the union. Over the 11 month period up to the end of August total subscriptions amounting to R4457 or R405 per month had been collected. (83) This sum still constituted less than half of the union's income: over the same period the union received R5501 or R500 per month from fund raising. Although membership figures for the period are not available, paid up membership must have been about 400.

In the following year, 1979, MAWU consolidated its shopfloor organisation and BEC by concentrating on the same factories and

not expanding to new factories unless circumstances demanded it. This policy bore fruit: at the 1979 AGM in September the secretary could report that the union was organising 18 factories of which 11 had continuous representation on the BEC.(84) Union organisation had become more concentrated in Kew and Benoni with virtually all the solid factories coming from these two regions with Benoni becoming the more important one. In Kew these factories were Precision Tools, Tensile Rubber, Craft Engineering, Toyota, and Barlows. In Benoni they were William Brothers, Light Castings, Vosa Valves, African Malleable Foundry (AMF) and Zinchem. Membership in the union had increased commensurately: at that stage the union's signed up membership was in the vicinity of 4000 and its paid up membership had risen to no less than 1000. (85)

John Stanwix, the regional secretary of MAWU, considered the primary criterion for a well organised factory to be the existence of an active shop stewards committee that functioned effectively as a channel of communication and decision-making with the members. In addition subscriptions had to be up to date and majority representation had to exist in all the departments of the factory with an overall representation of about 70% of the labour force. By these criteria he considered seven factories to be well organised in August 1979.

Stewards and Lloyds had resisted union recognition in its companies on the grounds that the union was not representative in all five of its Benoni companies. As a result the union attempted to organise all five with the intention of setting up a shop stewards council between them. By September 1979 it had only made significant gains in Vosa Valves where it had broken the liaison committee and forced management to deal exclusively

with the shop stewards. At that stage an agreement was being negotiated to entrench the rights won by the shop stewards.

The union was also on the verge of signing its first recognition agreement with Tensile Rubber in spite of the fact that it did not have strong shop stewards during 1979. In April their organiser reported that they were weak, but learning how to approach management.(86) In July the union had 130 out of 160 members and had succeeded in electing new shop stewards which did not include indunas.(87) This shop steward committee was also weak up to September 1979. It was not good at taking up grievances directly with management and did not have the strength and skill to force management into rapid decisions. As a result management had been able to engage in delaying tactics for weeks on end.(88) Thus although the recognition agreement was to be finalised, the danger existed that the workers would soon say that the agreement meant nothing.

Conflict on a very limited scale started to emerge as MAWU consolidated its position in 1979. They all had their origins in victimisation of shop stewards and union members. At William Brothers victimisation of union members took place over a period of three months commencing at the end of January 1979. The first round of dismissed members could be reinstated through the threat of legal action because they were such clear cases of victimisation. The second time five shop stewards were victimised, but it was through worker solidarity by staging a go-slow that they were reinstated.(89) At Precision Tools on the other hand three shop stewards were victimised in May 1979, but the shop floor was not strong enough to get them reinstated even though there was a partial and spontaneous walk-out by workers.  
(90)

The most serious conflict took place on 9 October 1979 when

Toyota workers went on strike. The union had been organising at Toyota for well on 18 months with management obstinately refusing to recognise the union. It insisted on having a liaison committee instead. The company's strategy was not to oppose union membership of the African workers, even of those who served on the liaison committee, but to recognise the liaison committee as the only 'legal representative body' for African workers in the company.

In September 1979 the personnel manager claimed that the company knew exactly which committee members belonged to the union. The company had also recently instituted Grievance Procedures that he claimed everybody knew as well as Disciplinary Procedures that required the employee to sign that he had received a warning for contravening company rules. The personnel manager perceived this as a 'communication tool'. (91)

MAWU's strategy in the light of Toyota management's policy was to take over the liaison committee and challenge management with union policy from there. As a result the committee meeting challenged managerial proposals vigorously. They rejected the Grievance Procedure allegedly known by all workers. The shop stewards also opposed the liaison committee constitution put forward by management and sought to gain approval of their own draft constitution from a general meeting of workers before approaching management. (92)

It was the company's new Disciplinary Procedures that precipitated the strike on 9 October. It commenced when four workers in the picking department were summoned by the warehouse manager to sign a warning that they had not reached production targets the previous Friday. When they returned their fellow workers in picking decided to see the warehouse manager in order

to receive an explanation about the issuing of formal warnings 'as this was something new'.(93) When they would not commence working until they had seen the warehouse manager, the fourteen pickers were escorted off the premises by security guards. Thereupon the remaining warehouse workers decided they would find out from management why the fourteen had been sent away. Police and an inspector from the Department of Labour were summoned by management. The police behaved very civilly, but workers refused to discuss issues with management until the police had left. They were requested to leave and did so.

The crunch came after some fairly heated discussion when the managing director, Mr. C.Alcock, gave the workers an ultimatum to return to work within three minutes or they would be fired.(94) When they did not do so they were all fired bringing the total no of workers fired to 101. Of these 76 were selectively re-employed by the company. Of the 25 who were not re-employed no fewer than 12 were shop stewards.(95) Included amongst them were many of the best shop stewards in MAWU such as D.Sejabi who was also vice-president of FOSATU. The Toyota strike was thus a set-back for MAWU. Not only did it lose one of its best organised factories, but also one of its strongest, if not the strongest, shop stewards committee.

The BEC stabilised itself over this period with regular attendance of members at organised factories from about mid-1977 (96) although it was still rather precarious. (97) Great emphasis was placed on the training of BEC members in the formal proceedings of meetings. It was felt by the regional secretary that too much emphasis was placed on the correct procedures and administration because the BEC subsequently became too caught up with time-consuming formalities thereby not allowing sufficient time to discuss key issues such as registration. (98)

The worker representatives gradually started to assert themselves and by 1978 they were taking strong stands on issues that came up in the BEC. (99) However, as was to be expected, policy initiatives still came from the organisers whose job it was to devise ways of advancing union organisational strength. In particular the White intellectuals played an active part. (100) Secondly, the formation of a national union in July 1978 brought a National Executive Committee (NEC) into existence. An emphasis was placed on the development of the NEC which started to usurp some of the decision-making powers which the regional secretary considered to be the preserve of the BEC. Confusion still existed over the areas of authority and jurisdiction between the BEC and NEC.(101)

#### Formation of the Transport and General Workers' Union

By 1978 it was felt that MAWU and CIWW (later TUACC) had sufficient stability and resources to open up another union.(102) A dispute arose during 1978 whether another industrial union or a general union should be formed. The forum for the conflict was the TUACC Council which contained predominantly MAWU shop stewards and so it was effectively they who decided the issue.

The dispute, as was the case with the IAS, hinged around whether to form another industrial union or a general union instead. But on this occasion worker representatives had some real say over the decision. Support for the general union position came from worker representatives, while the industrial union position received some support from intellectuals. (103) Behind the argument was also the differences in principle between a general and an industrial union, but what predominated in the

minds of the worker representatives was that the union movement should be concerned about all workers and not only workers in a particular industry. (104) That concern won majority support and so the Transport and General Workers Union was founded in November 1978 with Lydia Kompe as organiser. Although the decision subsequently turned out to be unwise, it was nonetheless significant that it was possible for worker representatives to defeat a position held by intellectuals in the movement.

#### 4.3 Evaluation of MAWU by October 1979

By the end of the period under consideration MAWU had successfully consolidated its organisation at a relatively small number of factories. This was a considerable achievement considering the fact that it was lying shattered by the turmoil it had experienced in 1976. The period was characterised by consolidation rather than expansion. The union was therefore not very large at the end of the period, but it had managed to lay a firm foundation from which it could expand rapidly over the following two years especially during 1981.

The organisational emphasis had been placed by the union officials on building up the BEC and shop steward committees. Particular attention was paid to the efficient functioning of the BEC and strengthening the shop stewards in performing their tasks at the work place. However, in the opinion of the regional secretary, the BEC had become detached from the shop stewards and rank and file in the process. Policy issues which were discussed at the BEC, such as the formation of FOSATU and registration, were not discussed thoroughly enough at the shop steward level. Consequently very few BEC members came to the meetings with mandates from the shop stewards at their plants. In addition BEC members did not refer decisions back to the shop

stewards for discussion or ratification. The role of the shop stewards in the union was thus confined to factory issues. This division between the BEC and the rank and file was not done deliberately, but was an unintended consequence of concentrating on the efficient functioning of the BEC in running the union and concentrating the shop stewards' attention of factory issues and gaining recognition. (105)

The regional secretary also considered that, while the concentration on the efficiency of the BEC had succeeded in stabilising its structure and functioning, it had also introduced rigidity. The committee became so caught up in administration and correct procedures that it did not have the flexibility or the time to discuss or to initiate key policy issues within the movement.

The union was operating in an extremely hostile climate with most of the employers adamantly opposed to recognising unregistered African unions and their elected shop steward committees. In spite of that the union was on the verge of signing a recognition agreement with one company, Tensile Rubber, shop stewards were taking grievances regularly to management at two companies, and the union was working through works committees at four other companies by the end of the period under consideration.

But there were also other reasons why union policy did not emerge from the rank and file through their elected representatives even though the union had built formal worker control into all the levels of their structures. This was because worker leadership had not been built up adequately and still lacked the experience to take effective control of the structures on which they had majority representation. As a

result the intellectuals and experienced organisers still played a dominant role and they used their position of power to maintain the existing policy of MAWU and TUACC.

Furthermore the creation of FOSATU changed the structures and dynamics of the former TUACC institutions immensely. MAWU became enmeshed within the tightly knit structures of FOSATU which formulated many of the policies that MAWU as an affiliated union had to adhere to, thereby limiting the scope for worker leadership and initiative on the BEC at that stage of its development. In order to understand the changes wrought by the founding of FOSATU, its formation, structure and policy are explained next.

## 5. FOSATU

### 5.1 Formation of FOSATU

The formation of FOSATU was a difficult process that took over two years to bring to fruition. The greatest difficulty was encountered in Transvaal where unions with different organising traditions and principles faced each other. The initiative for the formation of FOSATU came from the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA) after it disaffiliated from the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) in December 1976 because of its frustration with TUCSA's indifference towards organising African workers.(106) Almost immediately the National Executive of the union instructed its general secretary, Fred Sauls, and its national organiser, Brian Fredricks, to see if there were other unions who were interested in forming a federation. (107)

While the response of CIWW was ambiguous because of the complex situation in Transvaal, TUACC in Natal responded very favourably to the initiative because it provided an opportunity to expand the worker base it was operating from. TUACC also

felt that they would be strong enough to retain the organising principles and tight-knit structure that it had established. (108) However both CIWW and TUACC were in favour of the proposal because they believed worker organisation could be advanced most under a united labour movement.

There were also external factors that made the formation of a large national federation of registered and unregistered unions with Coloured, Indian and African members, but predominantly African members, desirable. The state was, at that stage, still hostile to the existence of the rapidly growing African trade unions which operated under the real threat of state repression. Management was, with very few exceptions, equally hostile to the re-emergence of an African trade union movement and a national federation could potentially provide resources and protection against managerial hostility as well.

As a result of NUMARWOSA's initiative the first conference to discuss the possibility of forming a new national federation was held in Johannesburg on 23 March 1977. The conference was attended by CIWW and MAWU(Transvaal), the four TUACC Natal unions, NUMARWOSA and its parallel African union, the United Automobile, Rubber and Allied Workers Union (UAW), 11 unions from the Rand based Black Consultative Committee which comprised 2 TUCSA parallel unions and 9 unions serviced by the Urban Training Project (UTP), and the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau (WPWAB).

The conference got off to a bad start with the Consultative Committee tabling a resolution declaring that it could not, at that stage, be party to the formation of a new national federation. Its principal reasons were based on resentment that MAWU had deliberately and knowingly established a counter Union

in the Reef', and that NUMARWOSA had dismissed the secretary of the UAW in Durban who had close links with the UTP. They indicated that they would only be willing to enter into a new federation if MAWU and the motor unions amended their ways, 'to suit the needs of the Consultative Committee'. (109)

Nonetheless, the end of the day saw a resolution passed which stated that it was 'essential for the progress of the labour movement and for achieving the aspirations of the workers that a Federation of unregistered and registered unions acceptable to our general membership be formed'. There were only two opposing votes which came from the TUCSA parallel unions. Although the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau did not vote against the formation of a federation, it decided to withdraw from further attempts to form one on the grounds that its formation was premature. This was because the initiative for the formation of the federation had not come from within the ranks of the workers and that officials remote from the workers would control the envisaged federation.

A Feasibility Committee was set up to carry on working towards a Federation with national and regional co-operation. The greatest difficulty in achieving regional co-operation as a basis for the establishment of a federation was encountered in the Transvaal. This was because of the animosity between the Consultative Committee and CIWW and their different organisational approaches. In June 1977 they met for the first time after the Feasibility Committee had made an effort to get them together.

The meeting broke down on an issue that hit at the heart of their organisational differences. The CIWW delegation wanted executive members of the unions to be present at the next meeting, but a representative from the Consultative made it clear

that only secretaries would attend from their side. This was in accordance with Consultative Committee practice where only secretaries of the unions met. The Consultative also reiterated their earliest position that they were not prepared to be involved in discussions until MAWU adhered to the guidelines laid out in the original resolution tabled at the conference in March.(110) As a result deadlock was reached and co-operation stalled in the Transvaal for over a year.

Imperceptible developments that took place over the next 11 months were differences that started to emerge within the UTP and Consultative Committee unions. Informal contacts were also being built up between CIWW and some of the Consultative unions' executive and rank and file members. These developments emerged at a meeting of the UTP unions' presidents and vice-presidents on 14 August 1978. The meeting which broke the longstanding impasse was convened in order to try and reform the Consultative into a strong and more representative co-ordinating body. The position of the Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU) was that the long proposed Federation should rather get off the ground. The union's president proposed that all the Consultative unions' Executives should rather attend a forthcoming meeting of all the Transvaal unions involved in the Federation talks. The proposal was accepted with only two abstentions. (111)

The meeting took place on 30 August 1978. While it constituted a major step forward for the Federation it also showed up the division that was taking place in the Consultative unions. It was attended by delegates from the Transvaal TUACC (CIWW having merged with TUACC in July) as well as the UAW and NUMARWOSA in Pretoria. The Consultative unions had representatives from GAWU, the East Rand Branch of the

Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (CCAWUSA), and the East Rand and Vereeniging branches of EAWU. There were also workers in attendance from the Consultative's Paper, Wood and Allied Union (PWAU) and the Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAU). (112)

At the meeting it was agreed to set up a Transvaal regional committee and to refer it back to the constituent unions for discussion. Finally, the regional committee met on 1 October 1978 in Sharpeville with about 150 trade union members and officials present including most of the Consultative union's secretaries. Although the latter again raised objections to the formation of a Federation, the matter was put to the vote. Support was pledged from MAWU, UAW, GAWU, PWAU, and the East Rand and Vereeniging branches of EAWU.(113) The Engineering union was in the process of splitting as a result of divisions which had emerged before the federation talks had commenced. The secretary of SFAU did not reveal what the decision of his union was, but it subsequently emerged that opinion in the union was divided. As a result it also split in two with the East Rand section joining the Federation.

With the Transvaal regional committee established and committed to a national Federation with regional co-operation, the remainder was plain sailing. A draft constitution and basic policies were thrashed out at a two-day seminar in October and then referred to the participating unions for discussion and ratification. Finally, on 13-15 April 1979, more than two years since the first conference to establish a new Federation, a Congress was held to inaugurate the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU).

## 5.2 Policy and Structure of FOSATU

At its inaugural Congress FOSATU committed itself to non-racial industrial unions in a tight Federation. This meant that admission to the Federation was to be selective in order to ensure a high degree of policy consensus among its affiliates. It also obliged the joint pooling of resources at a local and regional level with key regional policy decisions taken by Regional Councils in order to effect a balance between central and regional power. (114)

The organisational aims of FOSATU were to consolidate membership and stable shop-floor committee structures, leading to the winning of recognition and negotiating rights from management at both industrial and plant levels. It believed that

the essential basis for such rights is the recognition at the plant level of the union as representative of its members, of shop stewards rights to representation and negotiation on behalf of members and the participation of shop stewards in grievance and dispute procedures. (115)

The Federation's policy towards other South African organisations was not to attack them even though it may disagree with them. It also decided not to align itself with any party political organisation.

The challenge facing FOSATU as a tight Federation of unions with different traditions and practices, but striving for a common policy emerged at the Inaugural Congress. Considerable effort was spent on trying to hammer out a common practice on the salaries of officials of the different affiliates. While it sought to pay equal salaries at the level of average earnings of workers, it could not obtain consensus on the matter. Consequently, it took a decision in principle to strive towards an equalisation of salaries with some unions remunerating their officials at higher levels than other unions.

In structure the National Congress was made the highest governing and policy making body of FOSATU. Each affiliated union was entitled to representation ranging from four to twenty representatives according to the union's size with worker majorities on all union delegations. The National Congress would ordinarily meet every three years.

The management of the affairs of the Federation was vested in the hands of the Central Committee between meetings of the National Congress. The Central Committee would meet at least twice a year and be composed of two representatives from each affiliate, at least one of whom had to be a worker, three representatives from each Regional Council, at least two of whom had to be workers, and the President, Vice-President and General Secretary of FOSATU. This structure also guaranteed a worker majority. In addition any officials attending the meeting were granted full speaking rights, but no voting rights. Amongst other duties, the Central Committee had to implement policy measures adopted by the National Congress.

The Executive Committee was required to assist the General Secretary in the exercising of his duties between meetings of the Central Committee. It had to meet at least once every two months and take decisions in line with the policy directives given by the National Congress and Central Committee. In composition it comprised the President, Vice-President, General Secretary and one representative from each Regional Council who could be a union official. In contrast to all other constitutional institutions, the Executive Committee was the only one that did not constitutionally guarantee a worker majority although the first Executive Committee did have a four to three majority of worker representatives.(116)

In accordance with its policy of regional decentralisation,

the Federation's constitution allowed for the establishment of Regional Councils. Each affiliate union in the region would be entitled to 4 to 10 representatives depending on the size of the union. The Regional Council would ordinarily meet once a quarter and have jurisdiction over a wide range of regional issues.

Furthermore a Regional Executive Committee was established in order to carry out the day to day administration of the region in between Regional Council meetings. It would meet at least once every month and was to be composed of two representatives from each affiliate of which at least one had to be a worker. Secretaries could also be ex-officio members of the Committee, but they had only full speaking rights without voting rights, thereby again ensuring that worker representatives could not be outvoted by officials. The Federation furthermore encouraged affiliates to set up local offices of their unions so as to facilitate closer liaison between them.

It is worth noting that the formation and structure of FOSATU did not provide the IAS with any constitutional power. It had become a service organisation completely subordinate to the unions and, in so doing, achieved what its Executive had in mind for it in 1975.

FOSATU policy was therefore primarily aimed at building up strong bargaining power by means of worker representation on the shop-floor and negotiation rights at the plant level. It was also strongly committed to worker participation and control of the Federation as well as its affiliated unions. To this end it ensured worker majorities in the top policy-making bodies at the national and regional levels of the Federation. It experienced great difficulties implementing these policy objectives in the Transvaal region during the first 6 months of its existence.

The reasons why the Transvaal region of FOSATU had difficulty implementing its policy commitment to strong shopfloor organisation and democratic worker control of the unions are examined next. This is done as follows: the situation, practices and, where appropriate, history of each of the affiliated unions up to the second half of 1979 are first examined in detail. This not only serves to provide a valuable historical record of the unions, but also furnishes the raw material on which to base the subsequent analysis of the extent of democratisation and power attained by the unions.

### 5.3 The FOSATU Transvaal Affiliated Unions

#### The Engineering and Allied Workers' Union (EAWU) (117)

The history of EAWU and the internal dissent that led to the split in the union was considered in chapter 9. Of the unions formerly serviced by the UTP that decided to affiliate to FOSATU, the section of EAWU which joined the new Federation was by far the largest and most organised. At the end of August 1979 it had a signed up membership of about 1200 and claimed a paid-up membership of approximately 1000. Regionally the membership was distributed in three equal parts between the East Rand (Boksburg/Benoni), far East Rand (Springs/Brakpan) and the Vereeniging/Vaal areas.

The test of strength of a trade union does not depend purely on its numbers, but on the extent to which it is well organised in the factory. The general secretary of the union, Calvin Nkabinda, considered a factory to be well organised 'when it has a majority of members with meetings going on and people are really pushing in a factory and can make their weight felt'. By this criterion he did not consider any of the 28 factories where the union was organising to be well organised. There were 4 that he deemed to be reasonably organised, the remainder being

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poorly organised. Of the 4 reasonably organised factories, three had shop stewards committees. These were at Raleigh, Crabtree and Fagersta. The union had a fourth shop steward committee at van Leer where it used to be strong before the union had split in two.

EAWU had three organisers of which two were located in the Vaal area. The organisers went out to factories every day, but because of the large number of factories it was organising, did not get to each factory frequently. It was engaged in reducing the number of factories it was organising in order to enable organisers to visit each factory at least once a fortnight. This approach to organisation was starting to conform more to FOSATU's organisational policy.

The union's major organisational achievement from the time it had joined FOSATU was to be accorded preliminary recognition by Fagersta, a Swedish firm. The pressure on the firm to recognise EAWU did not arise from the union's shop floor organisation or members, but from a delegation of Swedish trade unionists who visited the firm. It transpired that the company would recognise a representative unregistered union, so EAWU commenced organising its African workers. When the union had attained what it thought to be 45% membership (it subsequently turned out to be only 31%), the secretary and the FOSATU Regional Secretary, Taffy Adler, approached management.

At this meeting the Fagersta management was very accommodating. It granted the union access onto the premises to address workers during the meal breaks for four successive Wednesdays, the use of the company's notice board to notify workers of the meetings, and for officials (only) to take up complaints with management until the union's representativeness

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had been established and the shop stewards recognised. The finalisation of a draft preliminary agreement also had to await proof of the union's representativeness. (118) The draft preliminary agreement recognised the union and the shop stewards as representatives of its members. It was however still a very limited form of recognition and would only have been able to serve as a basis for further negotiations of the union's rights.

To summarise, although EAWU had a fairly large signed up membership it only had a reasonably well established shop floor base at four factories. While the attainment of recognition from Fagersta was indeed a breakthrough for the union, it was not achieved by pressure from the union's rank and file and the preliminary agreement only conceded limited rights to the union.

#### Sweet, Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) (119)

The history and struggles of SFAWU, which was also formerly serviced by the UTP and similarly split in two when it joined FOSATU, has been considered in chapter 9. The section which affiliated to FOSATU was considerably smaller than EAWU. It only had 400 signed up members of which 250 were paid up. Although the secretary claimed that half of its membership was located in Krugersdorp and the Vaal area, she, as the sole union official, could only organise in Springs where the remaining members were. Factory meetings were held over weekends about once a month for a particular factory. In toto the union had about 40 shop stewards most of whom served on works committees which the union tried to take over. There were no shop stewards committees in the union.

The secretary deemed a factory to be well organised 'immediately it shows 30% members and there are shop stewards in the factory who are keen on trade unionism'. By these criteria

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she considered 5 out of the 12 factories where the union had members to be well organised. Two of the five factories were in Springs, one of which was Kellogg where the union had managed to sign a preliminary recognition agreement on 24 August 1979.

The preliminary agreement with Kellogg was very basic, but established some important shop floor rights. It recognised the right of the union to represent and negotiate on behalf of its members as well as the right of shop stewards to represent members. The shop stewards could carry out their duties during 'Company time' without specific permission of the plant's management. Union subscriptions would also be deducted by the company once membership exceeded 60% of the employees.(120)

Thus although SFAWU had lost a considerable number of its members in the split explained in chapter 9, it was in the process of reconstructing itself. A BEC had not yet been elected to direct the affairs of the union. Its major achievement in FOSATU up to the time under consideration was the recognition by Kellogg.

#### Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU) (121)

The formation, struggles and history of GAWU up to the second half of 1979 were considered in detail in chapter 9. It was shown that GAWU was relatively strong and militant in its early years, but its organisation had become rather brittle by 1979.

While the union claimed a total membership of 1200, the paid up membership was in the vicinity of 100 to 200. Of the sixteen factories the union was organising four were claimed to be well organised. However, by other criteria the union did not appear to have any well organised factories. It had a total of ten shop

stewards, no shop stewards committees, and no recognition from any companies except for informal contact at one company.

#### Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PWAU) (122)

As in the case of GAWU, a detailed history of PWAU up to the second half of 1979, including the period after it had affiliated to FOSATU, is provided in chapter 9 above. At the time the research was conducted the union was very weak. The secretary claimed a total membership of 1500 members of which only 116 were paid up members. Of the sixteen factories where the union had been organising, none were considered to be well organised.

The union did not show any signs of worker participation or control. It had a total of thirteen shop stewards, but no shop stewards committee as well as an inactive BEC.

Although PWAU made rapid organisational advances subsequently, it was at a low ebb in its history in August 1979. It had been on the decline since 1977 when White officials of the UTP were banned. The secretary diagnosed the union's problem as 'the shop floor is dead - what's destroying the union is no activity at the shop floor'.

#### United Automobile, Rubber and Allied Workers' Union (UAW)(123)

By 1979 the UAW was a national organisation with branches in Port Elizabeth, Durban and Pretoria. In October 1979 the Pretoria branch had still retained its former close links with NUMARWOSA, a parallel registered union in Port Elizabeth. On account thereof and because it was the only FOSATU union with an office in Pretoria, the union was somewhat isolated from its FOSATU affiliates in Transvaal.

The UAW was striving to implement FOSATU's policy of putting

emphasis on shop floor activity. It was concentrating on organising only three plants, Sigma, Bosal and BMW, because of their large size. The backbone of the union was Sigma with 1200 signed up members of whom 700 were paid up, subscriptions being paid by stop order agreement into Homes Trust. Total membership of the union was 1920 with 540 members at BMW where the union had commenced organising fairly recently in about April 1979.

Shop floor organisation of the UAW was intensive at Sigma. An organiser visited the plant daily and the shop steward committee met weekly. The shop steward committee also met monthly with union members who had only recently joined the union.

A factory was considered to be well organised by the regional secretary when it had a stable membership of more than 50%, when the shop stewards committee was involved in activities of the union, and when members were bringing up their problems actively and discussing them. It did not seem as if any of the UAW factories had reached that point yet. At Sigma there was a liaison committee, but with inactive union members represented on it. Union officials also had recognition to represent workers at Sigma, but not the shop stewards. At Bosal a steering committee, forerunner to a shop stewards committee, was meeting monthly. In toto, the union had 40 shop stewards and steering committee members of which 24 were active.

UAW also gave effect to the principle of non-racialism by organising Coloured workers on behalf of NUMARWOSA which did not then have a branch in Pretoria. Provision was made for their representation on the BEC of the union. Officials of the union were appointed on merit, but the union secretary and organiser, who were both Africans, thought that a White may have practical

problems. This was because young workers straight from school privately held black consciousness positions and would therefore be strongly against White union officials.

To summarise, the UAW tended to operate in isolation from the rest of the Transvaal FOSATU affiliates. It was in the process of building up membership, but had not achieved recognition and negotiation rights on the shop floor yet.

#### Transport and General Workers' Union (T&G) (124)

As was mentioned above TUACC established the T&G in November 1978 after considerable debate and appointed Lydia Kompe, a MAWU organiser and former shop steward at Heinemann, as the first secretary. From the IAS file she picked up members from two companies, namely Transvaal Coffin and Reef Chemicals. From there organisation expanded to two plants of Knep Timbers, one in Albert Street, the other in Isando.

Membership at the companies grew very well. At Transvaal Coffin all 30 of the employees were members, at Knep (Albert Str) 51 out of 55 were, and at Reef Chemicals 80 out of 112 joined the union. By September 1979 total membership of the union was 269 of which 177 were paid up members. There were three shop stewards committees at Transvaal Coffin, Knep (Isando) and Reef Chemicals. Two of them were meeting weekly with the third meeting fortnightly.

Due to pressure from the members who were perturbed by frequent dismissals, Kompe and the Transvaal Regional Secretary, Taffy Adler, approached the management of Reef Chemicals in order to gain recognition of the union. Although management were not antagonistic, they raised the problem whether a Transport and General Union was the appropriate union to be organising chemical workers.(125) The Paper Wood and Allied Workers' Union was also

critical of the Transport and General organising workers in the wood industry, highlighting the problems of a general union operating in an industrial union milieu.

The secretary considered a factory to be well organised when the union started talking to management and had strong support from the shop floor with the power to resist management actions. By this criteria she did not think that any of the T&G factories were well organised yet because she was not sure that the Reef Chemical's shop floor membership was stable. Nonetheless, three of the factories had very high proportion of members.

In addition workers at Transvaal Coffin and Knep (Isando) had engaged in work stoppages in demand of higher wages. At Transvaal Coffin the workers had donned their overalls, but refused to start working until they had spoken to the manager to explain the increased train and bus fares that they faced. At Knep (Isando) the workers downed tools for about 4 hours in demand of a wage increase and obtained a rise of one Rand per week.

To summarise, although the T&G was a small union, it had four plants with strong support from members who were starting to make their demands known to management. As a general union it was facing the problem of organising in industries where industrial unions already existed in FOSATU.

But that was only one of the many problems and challenges facing the Transvaal Region of FOSATU in their effort to build up a strong and democratic trade union movement. These problems are considered next by examining the extent to which FOSATU and its affiliated Transvaal unions had succeeded in building up democracy and power in the organisation by the second half of 1979.

#### 5.4 Democracy and Power in FOSATU Transvaal Unions in 1979

The creation of FOSATU presented the Transvaal Region with immense challenges as far as the democratisation process and strengthening of its unions were concerned. These challenges can broadly be divided into three categories. They were, firstly, the different organisational traditions of the unions that came into the Federation in the Transvaal Region. Whereas, under TUACC, the region had only one major and one fledgling union founded on the same principles, the Transvaal Region of FOSATU contained seven trade unions with three different traditions of worker participation on the shopfloor.

Secondly, the rapid increase in the number of unions administered by a tight-knit Federation resulted in a burgeoning of bureaucratic structures within the organisation. To add to the complications, the unions were spread over a large part of the whole P-W-V metropolitan complex, thereby necessitating the formation of yet more local and co-ordinating institutions. These bureaucratic structures constituted a challenge to democracy in the Federation.

The third challenge was related to the proliferation of bureaucracy in FOSATU: the formation of the Federation created structures and problems that were well in advance of the workers' ability to control, and so they had to rely on officials, many of whom were White intellectuals, for essential administration as well as key policy decisions.

These challenges to democracy and worker-based power facing the Transvaal Region of FOSATU up to September 1979 are considered in more detail below.

## Different Traditions of the Unions

The different organising traditions within the Transvaal Region of FOSATU were perceived in October 1979 by Taffy Adler, the Regional Secretary, as follows:

the problem is that there are a number of organising traditions within FOSATU. You have got a UTP tradition (I only call it UTP because it comes out of those unions) which, as I've seen it, is committed in constitutional form to the idea of general membership organising outside the factory in the township, and not directed at anything in particular; that where a problem comes up an official goes to talk to management, so that for example your Executives are elected by general membership, not by factory membership; your meetings generally are outside the office, not inside the offices; your organising thrust is actually collecting membership, not negotiating grievances. Now that seems to be the major trend that characterizes these East Rand unions at this point in time.

You then get the motor unions, whose organising commitments are actually very similar to the former TUACC unions. They have very active shop floors. They tend to make far greater use of branch meetings than we have, and there tends to be a general meeting of the branch every three months. They tend to have been not as firm as the TUACC unions have been about shop steward contact with management. While they will always accept the idea that officials report back to committees, their actual negotiations have been with officials in most cases.

And you have got TUACC unions who have attempted to establish direct communication between shop stewards and management with officials present where necessary.

Now, as far as the East Rand unions are concerned, former TUACC policy is becoming more of a rule. You have got in at least two of those unions, Engineering and Sweet Food, a clear commitment and a movement towards that particular form of organisation. (126)

These perceptions give an indication of the challenge that the different organisational approaches presented to FOSATU in Transvaal in building up strong and democratic unions. To the extent that unions did not have democratic worker participation on the shopfloor they were also weakened. This was particularly the case with the Glass and Paper unions. Alternatively, unions that had active shop stewards that were accountable to workers in the workplace were also developing their bargaining

power. MAWU had clearly made the greatest advances on both fronts, but the UAW and the Transport and General Union were also making sound progress.

There were various ways in which FOSATU was trying to gird up the democratic practices and power of its weaker unions in Transvaal. Staff meetings that were instituted for various reasons were used to try and instill new organisational practices in these unions. On such occasions MAWU could be relied on to support the Regional Secretary. Although the internal policy of unions could not be changed by MAWU, the union's secretary felt that MAWU was being relied on as a battering ram to break down the other unions' old practices and adopt the TUACC approach instead. (127) In addition the agreements being negotiated at Kellogg and Fagersta were opportunities to incorporate new organisational practices in the Sweet Food and Engineering unions. (128) The ultimate control over unions such as the Glass and Paper ones was however their accountability to the Regional and National Executives where they would have to justify the financial support they were receiving.

It was not only at the level of the unions, but also at the Regional level that FOSATU experienced challenges in rendering the organisation strong and democratic.

#### **Burgeoning Bureaucratic Structures**

In Transvaal FOSATU found itself in the dilemma that it created structures that were constitutionally in the hands of worker representatives, but who were not in a position to administer them on a daily basis. Since FOSATU did not intend to have a purely nominal control by workers of the unions and the Federation, it had, according to John Stanwix, to lay down rigid procedures in order to ensure that the worker representatives

were fully informed before any decision were taken. (129) The implementation of these rigid procedures required more structures and organisational control from above. It thus led to a bureaucratisation of FOSATU in Transvaal even though it was with the intention of increasing worker participation within its structures.

There were other factors that also accounted for the burgeoning of bureaucratic structures in the Transvaal Region of FOSATU. A large number of staff meetings emerged in different forms such as local and regional staff meetings. (130) These meetings emerged as a result of the perceived need on the part of officials to run the unions and the Federation effectively. The essential features of these staff meetings were not only that they arose extra-constitutionally, but that they did not include any worker representatives on them. The staff meetings therefore had the effect of eliminating the participation of worker representatives in the administration and control of FOSATU.

#### **Workers' Capacity to Control**

Besides the complete absence of workers from staff meetings, there were other problems that faced FOSATU in facilitating the emergence of worker leadership. According to the regional secretary of MAWU in Transvaal during 1979, the challenge to create worker leadership in FOSATU came about because structures were created in advance of the workers' capacity to take effective control of them. Because of that officials, many of whom were White intellectuals, but also experienced African secretaries of the larger and stronger unions, took responsibility for the administration and key policy decisions of

FOSATU.

In Stanwix's opinion there were very real factors that forced the Federation to operate in that way during 1979. Responsibility for complex and important matters such as organising strategies, union administration, fundraising, relations with other organisations, especially the international trade union movement, had to be assumed without delay. The inability of workers to take the decisions strengthened the conviction of union officials that they had to take responsibility for these matters. Once these patterns had been established, they were not easy to break. It was therefore difficult for intellectuals to pass responsibilities on to workers and to judge when the appropriate time had come to do so. (131)

The problem of intellectual and official domination was presented in a somewhat different manner by the Regional Secretary of FOSATU in Transvaal in October 1979:

I think there is a distinction to be made: there is the question of initiatives and there is the question of support. It is probably true to say, at this point in time, that FOSATU policy initiatives are coming out of five or six people and that they are not all White. I would say that those people all have their own support basis and that they would not make those things public unless they have consulted their support basis. (132)

The five or six people that he considered policy initiatives to come from were the FOSATU General Secretary, Alec Erwin, himself as the Transvaal Regional Secretary, and the general secretaries of MAWU (June Nala), NUMARWOSA (Freddie Sauls), WPMWU (Joe Foster), and, to some extent, EAWU (Calvin Nkabinda). Of these only two were White intellectual officials while the remaining four were experienced Coloured and African officials. He also perceived difficulties in developing worker leadership within FOSATU:

The attempt is being made to develop leadership from the factories, which is incredibly difficult, because you are taking guys from a world which is so limited and constrained. It is limited by the factory and the township, it is limited by the problems of being Black and poor in South Africa, and you thrust them into a really highly sophisticated movement in terms of finance, in terms of decisions and choices they have to make - parallel unions, IMF, AFL-CIO, and you just consider what you are actually thrusting on somebody.

In spite of that, the Regional Secretary could point to aspects where some measure of success had already been achieved:

Now, given that, I would actually say that we have been quite successful. I think that in terms of the general secretaries that have been produced, there is no one to touch June Nala around. There is nobody that could say that she is dominated by Whites.

The second area that I think we have been successful is through the Secretariats here and in Natal, and through the MAWU office-bearers' meeting, we have built up a really significant grouping of worker leadership. Guys like David Sebabi or Moses Mayekiso or Andrew Zulu, I think, are really outstanding leaders and who have behind them really strong factories. And it seems to me that is the test of leadership. (133)

Besides the individual worker leaders that Adler could point to, the stronger unions in FOSATU had succeeded in developing representative worker leadership on the shopfloor by 1979. This was particularly the case with MAWU which had seven well organised factories. SFAWU and EAWU were in the process of gaining formal recognition at Kellogg and Fagersta respectively and had about four well organised factories each. In addition the UAW had sound organisation at Sigma. Democratic worker participation had thus emerged to some extent in FOSATU and its affiliated unions in the Transvaal by 1979.

Although FOSATU's whole policy orientation and structure was aimed at transferring initiatives and controls to worker leaders, insufficient time had elapsed for it to be fully realised. In order to take up the challenge FOSATU also used education as an important tool with which to transfer skills to workers. It was running an educational course for BEC groups with prominent shop

stewards in attendance as well. The course included history as well as topical issues which confronted the BECs. (134)

In order to draw together the analysis on the democratisation process, the challenge facing FOSATU in creating democratic worker control in Transvaal had three components. The first was to create democratic structures that ensured adequate worker representation at all levels of the organisation. The second one was to facilitate the emergence of worker leadership. By so doing the domination by intellectuals and officials in FOSATU could be curtailed while retaining the valuable contributions they were making. For democratic workers' control to exist it was however not sufficient for worker leadership merely to emerge, but for such leadership to be representative and accountable to the rank and file of the union. The third component was thus to attain representative worker leaders who were fully in touch with, and accountable to, the rank and file on the shop floor.

The first component had constitutionally been achieved although the emergence of extra-constitutional staff meetings constituted a departure from the principle of democratic workers' control. The second component had also been met to some extent as competent worker leaders had emerged from the ranks of the unions in FOSATU. The third component, the attainment of representative worker leadership, was being met on the shopfloor level of some of the unions, but less so at the level of the unions as a whole, and least on the regional level. The union with the best shopfloor organisation, MAWU, was only at the stage where the BEC was concentrating on union affairs while the shop stewards committees were focusing on work place issues. The BEC representatives were thus not being mandated by their shop

stewards or their rank and file on more general union issues being dealt with in the BEC.(135) As a result such key issues as registration was not discussed meaningfully below the level of the BEC in MAWU. Furthermore, although the Regional Council and Regional Executive Committee had worker majorities on them, the extra-constitutional staff meetings that emerged in order to administer and co-ordinate union affairs had no worker representatives on them at all.

In their strategy to increase their power the formation of FOSATU constituted an advance for the unions. The formation and consolidation of a tight Federation of trade unions laid the foundations for a more united labour movement independent of state and managerial control. In an environment where the state and management were both hostile to the rapidly emerging independent trade unions, the unification of a fairly divergent group of such unions was able to afford greater strength and protection to the unions than they would have attained in isolation of each other. Not only was FOSATU (Transvaal) successfully founded, but it was also consolidating the divergent unions into a working Federation committed to a common policy with the same organisational aims.

## Part 4

### Western Cape

Part Four examines only one union, the Western Province General Workers' Union (WPGWU). Although there were a number of independent unions organising in the Western Cape during the 1970s, the WPGWU was the only one that emerged in the early 1970s and organised African workers. The other independent unions organising in the region during this period were the Food and Canning Workers' Union, the African Food and Canning Workers' Union, the Western Province Motor Assembly Workers' Union, and the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association. Although the WPGWU was organising in the Western Cape up to Paarl, most of its organisation took place in the Cape Town region during the 1970s.

Employment in the Cape Peninsula, consisting of the four magisterial districts of Cape Town, Bellville, Wynberg and Simonstown, had some outstanding characteristics that influenced the form of organisation of the WPGWU. Table 1 demonstrates that African workers were concentrated in the construction, services, manufacturing, transport and commerce sectors in 1970. In the manufacturing sector a large number of Africans were employed in engineering (particularly marine engineering) and the food industries. In the commerce sector a large number worked for the dairies, while in the transport sector many worked in the docks as stevedores and for the South African Railways and Harbours. In the services sector the majority were women working as domestic workers while a considerable number of men were garage pump attendants. (1)

Unlike any other metropolitan region in South Africa, African workers comprised a small minority (14%) while Coloured workers constituted almost 50% of the labour force in the Cape

Peninsula in the 1970s. The proportion of African workers varied between industries, but was high where working conditions were less favourable and African migrant workers had to be recruited to perform the work at low wages. For instance, the proportion of Africans in the construction sector was 29,7% - almost twice as high as the proportion of Africans in the secondary sector as a whole. On the other hand, the proportion of Africans in white-collar jobs, such as the finance sector, was extremely low (only 4,5%). Furthermore, because Africans constituted a small proportion of the labour force, their total number in specific sectors was relatively small - all the manufacturing industries together only employed 12 475 Africans.

Table 1

## African and Coloured Employment by Economic Sector 1970

## Cape Peninsula

Sector	African		Coloured		Total	
	No.	% (1)	No.	% (1)	No.	% (1)
Primary						
Agric.	3031	30,4	5204	52,2	9976	100,0
Mining	444	33,4	371	27,9	1329	100,0
Total	3475	30,7	5575	49,3	11305	100,0
Secondary						
Manuf.	12475	10,2	80651	66,1	122082	100,0
Constr.	14598	29,7	26540	54,0	49117	100,0
Electr.	645	17,0	1573	41,4	3802	100,0
Total	27718	15,8	108764	62,2	175001	100,0
Tertiary						
Commerce	7460	9,9	32088	42,7	75075	100,0
Finance	1228	4,5	4113	15,1	27247	100,0
Transport	7489	19,2	10703	27,5	38990	100,0
Services	13022	11,9	54312	49,8	109039	100,0
Total	29199	11,7	101216	40,4	250351	100,0
Total	60392	13,8	215555	49,4	436657	100,0

## Note

(1) The percentage refers to the proportion of African and Coloured employees in each sector; they do not add up to 100 because White and Indian employment figures have been omitted.

Source: Hendrie and Horner, 1976, Table 2, pp.9-10.

In addition to historical factors, a major contributing reason why the labour force in the Cape Peninsula had a low proportion of Africans and high proportion of Coloureds was the state's policy, formally adopted in 1955, of making the Western Cape a Coloured Labour Preference Area. This policy was eventually embodied in the Bantu Labour Act of 1964 which compelled employers in the Area to employ only Coloured workers. Only if Coloured labour was not available, could a permit be obtained to employ African workers. Combined with influx control restrictions and further measures which included freezing the African family housing stock in the Cape Peninsula in 1966, the policy severely curtailed the entry of Africans into the Area. (2)

The Coloured Labour Preference Policy had some important consequences for the African labour force in the Cape Peninsula. Besides only having access to jobs which Coloured workers did not wish to have, facilities for skill acquisition for African labour were deliberately not provided in the region. As a result African workers tended to be employed in unpleasant jobs requiring very little skill and at low wages. In a survey of employers in Cape Town in 1978 it was found that, with few exceptions, Africans were employed in unskilled and semi-skilled positions. (3) This was borne out in a survey conducted by Janet Graaff and myself of a stratified random sample of 211 African workers in Cape Town during 1975-6. It was found that 66% were performing unskilled work while the remaining 34% were semi-skilled operatives. None of the workers interviewed were employed in highly skilled occupations. (4)

Combined with influx control the Policy also exacerbated the immense gender discrimination against African women. Only 15%

of the African labour force formally employed in the Cape Peninsula were women. However the services sector, of which 65% of the African labour force were women who were mostly employed in domestic service, is included in this aggregate statistic. If the service sector is excluded, African women only made up a miniscule 1,3% of African employment in the remaining sectors in 1970. (5) In the Cape Peninsula African women had therefore almost completely been excluded from access to employment in all the economic sectors other than domestic service.

By restricting the permanent settlement of Africans in the Western Cape region and freezing the family housing stock, but at the same time requiring an increasing number of African workers in the regional economy, another consequence of the Coloured Labour Preference Policy was to make increased use of migrant workers. The result was that a disproportionately high number of the African labour force in the Cape Peninsula were migrant workers. According to an estimate by Wilson no less than 85% of the economically active African men housed within the municipal boundary of Cape Town in 1971-2 were migrant workers. (6)

These socio-economic characteristics of the African labour force were influential with regards to the form of organisation adopted by the WPGWU as well as its policy and strategies. These are all considered in chapter 11.

## Chapter 11

### The Western Province General Workers' Union 1973 - 1979

#### Introduction

This chapter deals with the history of the Western Province General Workers' Union (WPGWU) from its origin in 1973 as the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau (WPWAB) up to the end of 1979. After considering its founding, attention is focussed on how it struggled to transform itself for the first four years of its existence into a workers' movement through its struggles on the shopfloor as well as the internal democratisation of the structure of the Advice Bureau. Specific aspects that are also examined include why it became a general, not industrial, union which initially organised only African and no Coloured workers. The growth and development of the union after 1977 is thereupon considered to the point where it culminates in the formal recognition of the stevedores committee of the union by the Cape Town stevedoring companies in December 1979. In the final section its strategies for power over this period are assessed as well as the extent to which it had succeeded in building up democratic workers' control in the union. With regards to the latter the tensions between democracy and leadership and the role of White intellectuals in the union are given careful consideration.

#### 1. Origins of the WPGWU: Founding of the WPWAB

The WPGWU commenced its life as the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau whose origin can be traced to two different sources. On the one hand African trade unionists who gained experience in SACTU in the fifties and early sixties and,

on the other hand, students from the University of Cape Town (UCT) who were members of the Wages Commission in conjunction with some office holders from NUSWEL (National Union of Students Welfare and Social Action Department), a division of NUSAS (National Union of South African Students). The former trade unionists felt it had become time that African workers could be organised again after the severe repression of SACTU in the sixties. The origin thereof was explained by Zora Mehlomakulu, who had been with the WPGWU from its inception, as follows:

So in 1972 when the bannings of some people expired, of the leadership in particular, we actually had a meeting to sort out what to do about trade unions. So a decision was made that trade unions should be started again in the Western Cape, but not under the South African Congress of Trade Unions. And there was a problem of financial resources that we had. Just at the time we came to know about the Wages Commission and then decided after several meetings that we approach them and see what can come of our meetings. So in middle '72 we did that and that is how we came across people who were actually prepared to assist in the initial stages of the whole thing. (1)

The students grasped the opportunity to become directly involved with the former SACTU trade unionists in starting to organise African workers. In fact, they played a leading role in shaping the structure and constitution of the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau.

The structure of the WPWAB consisted of an Executive Committee Annual General Meeting of members. The Executive Committee which contained exclusively worker members had to 'administer the affairs of the Advice Bureau' which included engaging or dismissing staff and receiving financial contributions from members. The Board of Trustees, which was composed of officials from registered trade unions and professional people such as lawyers and academics, had considerable power constitutionally. It was responsible for

raising any monies other than members' contributions, and the constitution further specified that

The Board shall have the power to approve the appointment of a Secretary and other staff of the Bureau. The Board shall be consulted by the Executive regarding the policy of the Bureau, and shall be competent to require an explanation from the Executive Committee on any decision taken by that Committee.

One of the reasons why the Advice Bureau constitution gave so much financial control to the Board of Trustees was to satisfy financial donors that their money was safeguarded from misappropriation. In the founders' opinion professionals and registered trade union officials were people with the necessary responsibility and status that would be acceptable to donors.

Financially the Advice Bureau was initially almost entirely dependent on outside sources. For the first two and a half years of its life it relied very heavily on donations channelled through the Wages Commission until the third quarter of 1975 when it received its first donation directly from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) based in Brussels. All donations had to be deposited into the Trustees' account which was empowered to make payments exclusively to the Executive account. The Executive Committee was required to make a monthly application of the expected expenditure of the Advice Bureau in writing to the Trustees, but this often did not happen. The money was transferred regularly nonetheless.

The WPWAB was launched on 9 March 1973 to coincide with the first training course for members run by Eric Tyacke from the Johannesburg-based Urban Training Project. At that meeting a proposed constitution of the WPWAB was presented to the workers for their consideration. The inaugural meeting was held on 20 June 1973 at the Christian Institute in Mowbray when the constitution was accepted and the first Executive Committee and

Board of Trustees were elected.

In reality the power over the affairs of the Advice Bureau for the first four years of its existence lay in the hands of a small informal group composed of White intellectuals and the African organising secretary. Some of the intellectuals who were from UCT and the legal profession were represented on the Board of Trustees. In late July 1973 the intellectuals who were active in the Advice Bureau formed themselves into a loose organisation, the Workers' Educational Project (WEP), which had, as its formal task, the running of a training program for the Advice Bureau. Around November 1973 it changed its name to Workers' Advisory Project (WAP) as a safeguard against potential state harassment for being involved in 'Bantu Education'. (2)

The strategy to transform the Advice Bureau into a democratic worker organisation was present from its inception. The situation when the Advice Bureau was started was that it had no members and, more importantly, no organised workers in any factories. It was therefore necessary to create the necessary structures which would facilitate the development and growth of a democratic labour movement within the organisation. Only as worker organisation in the factories flourished and matured could workers themselves take control of the Advice Bureau.

The Advice Bureau adopted a cautious organising strategy at the outset in view of the past repression and fears many African workers had of trade union membership. The founders of the WPWAB thus decided to start an organisation that would deal with individual workers' complaints. The complaints service was started and soon manned by Barnet Ntsodo. It has remained as a permanent service offered to individual workers dealing mainly with complaints about their work. At the same time African workers who joined the Advice Bureau in large numbers from

particular companies were encouraged to elect factory committees at their place of work and to have them registered as works committees under the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act of 1973. Although the decision to form works committees came in for much criticism, especially from the newly-founded independent trade unions in Durban, the WPWAB decided it was an appropriate strategy as Zora Mehlomakulu later explained:

What attracted us was the fact that the works committees, although introduced by the government, had a measure of democracy in that workers were allowed to elect their representatives. (3)

In addition to that it was argued in an article in 1976 which closely reflected the organisation's viewpoint that

The Bureau's view is that registration helps workers gain management recognition. Obligatory legal recognition of this sort provides them with a channel for direct negotiation with their employers. (4)

However at that time the primary emphasis was already placed on sound workplace organisation:

The Advice Bureau, nevertheless, certainly does not contend that registration of a factory committee as a 'works committee' is the principal or essential requisite for sound worker organisation at the workplace. The basic requirements are a united, educated and trained labour force with an elected committee, continuously responsible to the workers and maintaining well-established organisational connections with other committees. In this context the argument for or against registration is immaterial. (5)

From early on in its history the WPWAB placed an emphasis on rank and file participation in union affairs by holding general factory meetings of all the union members.

Since registered works committees could by law represent only African workers the strategy effectively meant that the Advice Bureau would organise only African workers. It was based on the desire to organise workers who were not organised and at that time no African workers were organised in Cape Town. There was in principle no opposition to organising Coloured workers as the Advice Bureau adopted a non-racial stance from its inception.

A tactical reason for not organising Coloured workers initially, was the desire on the part of WPWAB to avoid provoking the hostility of the registered Coloured trade unions. At that early stage the founders were not aware that many of these unions were mainly craft unions with the result that there were unskilled Coloured workers who were not organised. The founders also had an exaggerated idea of the organisational strength of the registered unions. This decision was also necessary diplomatically since three secretaries of these registered unions were elected onto the Board of Trustees of the WPBWAB.

The fact that the Advice Bureau was organising only African workers led it to adopt an organisational approach that was unique amongst all the independent unions which emerged around the same time. It decided to organise as a general rather than an industrial union. There were two basic reasons for this decision. The first was that, because of the Coloured Labour Preference Policy in the Western Cape African workers tended to be unskilled and semi-skilled operatives. Combined with the fact that many of them were migrant workers with only one year contracts, they tended to have a high inter-industry job mobility. In order to retain workers who switched jobs from industry to industry fairly frequently, the Advice Bureau decided to organise on a general rather than an industrial level. (6) The second reason was a political consideration. Intellectuals in the organisation believed that stronger working class consciousness and solidarity could be attained through a general union than through fragmented industrial unions.

The Advice Bureau initially made very rapid organisational strides amongst African workers in the Cape Peninsula. Its early progress, as well as the reasons therefore, are considered

next.

## 2. Early Organisation of the Advice Bureau 1973-74

The Advice Bureau expanded fairly rapidly up to the end of 1974. Although there tended to be some exaggeration in reports early in the organisation's history, the organising secretary reported that eleven works committees had been formed by August 1973 and that most of them were registered. The enterprises with works committees were in very diverse sectors of the economy. For instance four of the works committees were established at Steeldale Reinforcing, Western Steel, Groote Schuur Hospital and Mowbray Maternity Hospital. Five more works committees were in the process of being formed including two more at hospitals. (7) By October 1973 the Advice Bureau claimed to have approximately 2000 members. (8) A month later it had established no less than twenty works committees. Not all the workers at these places were members of the Advice Bureau, but it allegedly waited until about 75% of the workers at each enterprise were organised before forming a committee. (9) After a year and a half's existence at the end of 1974 the Advice Bureau claimed to have just over 3000 members and 34 works committees. (10)

Why did the Advice Bureau grow so rapidly in its first two years of existence? Even though there was an element of exaggeration in the claims put forward at the time - the 34 committees were by no means all functioning - the growth of workers who were organised was still remarkably high. Workers from factories would turn up at the Advice Bureau office with lists of members joining the Bureau without having been formally organised. Conditions were right for African workers to seize the opportunity to be organised since most of them were occupied

in the least skilled and most unpleasant tasks due to the strict enforcement of the Coloured Employment Preference Policy in the Western Cape. But there were three other influences that contributed to the growth of the Advice Bureau in that period. The first was the workers' newspaper, *Abasebenzi*, that was published in Xhosa eight times per year by the Wages Commission of UCT. It was distributed in large numbers in the African townships. The paper exhorted workers to take their problems to the Advice Bureau, to elect factory committees and to attend the training provided by WAP.

The second influence was the organisation that went on informally in the African townships. Elijah Loza, former chairman of the SACTU local committee in the Western Cape and placed under house arrest around 1963, informally recruited African workers for the Advice Bureau. Christmas Tinto, former secretary of the SACTU-affiliated South African Railways and Harbours Workers Union and was banned in 1963, claimed to have held meetings in one of the African townships where he told workers to join the Advice Bureau. He also stressed to the workers that it was not illegal for them to do so. (11)

A third influence was the training courses that were run regularly on Saturday afternoons for members of the Advice Bureau by WAP in a dilapidated old hall in Athlone belonging to the British Ex-Servicemen League. The course was commenced around August 1973 and controlled by the intellectuals in WAP. Mehlomakulu however conducted much of the training because of her organisational experience, knowledge of works committees, and fluency in Xhosa. Otherwise, whenever a White intellectual took over the training an interpreter translated the proceedings into Xhosa. The first session included a simulation game on

negotiations between management and workers over grievances at work. Approximately 20 to 30 workers attended the course on average.

Written material was frequently provided at the course. A roneoed 'Handbook on Works Committees' with information on how to set up a statutory works committee and run it, was widely distributed and frequently used. A Training Manual was also written by members of WAP and handed out in stages over time. It was in both English and Xhosa (with the two languages on opposite pages facing each other) and covered topics like South African labour history, capitalist production, and trade unions. The basic approach in the training sessions was intended to make workers aware of the reasons for their exploitation and oppression and that the responsibility to struggle for their rights and emancipation rested on them.

The regular training course served to bring together members of the Advice Bureau who worked at different factories. By so doing it provided a focal point for the Advice Bureau's organisational activities. But the course was not without its problems. The content of the course was not closely enough integrated with the day to day struggles of workers at the workplace. It was too intellectually oriented and aimed primarily at giving workers an understanding of the South African political economy. This was the wrong emphasis at such an early stage of the organisation. As a result attendance at the training sessions was sporadic except for a small number of stalwart members who attended regularly.

A valuable asset to worker education was added to the Advice Bureau in May 1975 when the Western Province Literacy Project linked up with it. The technique it used was aimed at creating an awareness in workers of their exploitation, the causes

thereof, and the need for organisation to challenge it meaningfully. The Literacy Project staff subsequently became closely connected with the organisational work of the Advice Bureau.

As factories became organised and elected works committees, weekday evening courses were run for the committee members. These focussed more directly on the workplace and factory committee. They were consequently of more immediate use to the workers and this form of training was sustained in the organisation whereas the general training course faded away by 1977.

The growth of the Advice Bureau inevitably attracted the attention of the state which proceeded to harrass the Bureau. It started off with the arrest of one of the two organisers in the Bureau's office in December 1973 for not having his pass in order. Thereupon there was a lengthy struggle with the Bantu Affairs Administration Board to obtain the registration of the secretary, Zora Mehlomakulu, as an employee of the Executive Committee. The office had to be closed for a few weeks in 1974 and voluntarily staffed by Whites until the end of August when she was finally registered.

In mid-August 1974 a highly significant event took place that heralded the start of the Advice Bureau's transformation to a worker movement. It was the first strike action taken by members of the Advice Bureau who worked at Nautilus Marine. To understand the circumstances which led up to the strike and the eventual consequences of the conflict, it is necessary to examine the Advice Bureau's organisation and the role of the African workers at the company.

## 2.1 The Nautilus Marine Conflict: August - October 1974 (12)

Nautilus Marine, a marine engineering company situated in the Cape Town docks which carried out repairs and maintenance services on ships, was employing about 286 African workers in 1974. In the beginning of the year Mehlomakulu started organising Nautilus workers. By early June 1974 it was felt that organisation had advanced sufficiently to make an approach to management. At a meeting attended by 157 Nautilus workers it was unanimously agreed that they should try to obtain a registered works committee. A provisional committee of twelve members was elected which approached management to call a meeting so that a statutory works committee could be elected as specified under Section 7(a) of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act. Management was initially reluctant to do so, but eventually consented and called a meeting on 27 June 1974. The Bantu Labour Officer who was a White was also in attendance.

According to an African employee, workers unanimously voted by a show of hands in favour of having a works committee and for the twelve provisional members to serve on it. In spite of that, management refused to allow them to have a works committee and tried to pressure them into accepting a liaison committee instead. Workers however strongly opposed the formation of a liaison committee and when management argued that a works committee would be illegal the meeting broke up.

In the light of events at the meeting the Advice Bureau decided to resort to a legal strategy. It first drew up a memorandum calling for the election of a works committee which was signed by nearly all the African employees at Nautilus Marine. The memorandum was then handed to a firm of attorneys which wrote a letter to Nautilus management requesting them to call a meeting at which a works committee could be elected as

laid down in the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act.

The response of Nautilus was to send a manager to the lawyer concerned. He angrily told the lawyer that he should keep his nose out of the private affairs of the company. In spite of being shown the memorandum signed by the workers, the manager departed leaving the attorney's letter behind.

This interlude led to a further deterioration in the relationship between management and the African workers. The last straw for workers came in mid-August when management fired an African employee, Billion Maqula, who had worked for the company for nineteen years as a sand-blaster on the grounds that he had been criticising the firm including management. He was also accused of giving the firm a bad name.

Workers thereupon decided to take things into their own hands. When they turned up at work they refused to get into their overalls until Maqula had been reinstated and they had been allowed to elect a works committee. The work stoppage by the workers had a dramatic effect on management. They completely capitulated and sent a car to fetch Maqula from the township. Upon arrival management publically apologised to him and presented him with a new overall. Management also acceded to the demand for a statutory works committee. Within three hours the work stoppage was over with the workers' demands having been fully met.

The successful outcome of the strike by the Nautilus Marine workers plus the fact that it was the workers themselves who initiated the strike, had a profound impact on the intellectuals and workers in the Advice Bureau. The strike demonstrated the power of workers when they acted collectively to withhold their labour. The Nautilus workers had achieved within three hours

what the intellectuals with their legal strategy and the aid of a firm of lawyers could not achieve over three months. The lesson was learned that collective action on the part of workers was a powerful weapon and could be used to build up the strength of the Advice Bureau.

Nautilus Marine workers were however so flushed with their quick and complete victory that they developed an exaggerated sense of their importance in the Advice Bureau and of their strength in the workplace. Their unwillingness to reflect more deeply on their action was to lead to their downfall within a relatively short time.

The works committee came into operation early in September 1974, but from the beginning it was clear that the relationship between it and management was extremely strained. At one of the first meetings on 20 September with management there were strong disagreements. At the meeting the works committee put forward three demands. The first was the reinstatement of a former practice whereby workers could take six months unpaid leave while they returned to the Homelands. The second was a minimum wage of R35 per week for all African employees. At that time the basic wages were in the vicinity of R16 to R25 per week. The third demand was the removal of three African supervisors, who were generally referred to as 'boss boys', from the rest room used by other workers. These three 'boss boys' were accused of working against the interests of the workers and of being opposed to the works committee. They allegedly misrepresented the works committee and so put it in a very unfavourable light with management.

Nautilus management conceded to the first demand and were willing to reinstate the practice of revolving unpaid leave for African employees. They were however adamant that they would

not give in to the remaining two. A heated dispute ensued, particularly over the three 'boss boys', an issue over which the works committee felt very strong, but the issue was not resolved. As a result of the argument African workers took the drastic step of imposing a ban on working overtime, on night shifts, and over weekends. This was particularly inconvenient for a marine engineering firm since ships coming into the harbour could urgently require repairs and maintenance regardless of the time of day or day of the week.

This decision on the part of workers considerably increased managerial hostility towards the works committee and the African employees. Intellectuals in the Advice Bureau subsequently warned Nautilus workers not to take precipitate action as it appeared that management attitudes had hardened considerably since the first strike. Also these demands were more costly for management to meet and workers should therefore expect more resistance from management.

A further extraneous event worsened relations between the two parties yet more when one of the Nautilus African workers was murdered early one morning while on his way to work. His death was unrelated to the dispute at Nautilus, but it gave the state security apparatus the opportunity to intervene. On 23 September the Railway police detained the Nautilus works committee for the whole day in separate cells while the police and security police interrogated them individually. The interrogation did not concentrate on the death of the Nautilus employee, but on the formation of the works committee and the training course intellectuals in the Advice Bureau was running for African workers on Saturday afternoons.

This experience strained the relationship between management

and the workers to breaking point. Workers even started refusing to obey commands of management whom they perceived as being insensitive to workers' needs and trying to intimidate workers by co-operating with the police.

Management thereupon went on the offensive: at closing time on Monday, 30 September 1974, they fired ten workers some of whom were works committee members. This was perceived as a clear act of victimisation on the part of the remaining workers and the following morning they held a meeting with management to discuss the expulsion of the ten workers. According to the workers, management advanced different reasons. At first they presented the dismissals as a reduction of staff for economic reasons, but subsequently stated that they were getting rid of those workers with short service who were listening to 'agitators'. Management allegedly also threatened workers that they would carry on dismissing ten workers per day if they carried on being difficult and 'cheeky'. Workers thereupon tried to persuade management to reinstate the dismissed workers, but management refused to budge. Workers responded that they were not prepared to work under such conditions and went on strike for a second time. They downed tools and left the firm.

At an ensuing meeting at the Advice Bureau the workers decided that they would return to work the following day, but that they would present management with a list of their demands.

The most important demands were:

The reinstatement of the sacked workers.

No further victimisation of workers.

Management must be prepared to negotiate with the Works Committee and not call in the police whenever there was disagreement.

A minimum wage of R35 per week.

The next morning upon arrival at Nautilus Marine the workers

found the South African Railways police were present. The workers were shepherded into a large hall while the works committee deliberated with management. Management informed the committee that they were adamant about the dismissal of the ten workers and, because of the lack of obedience of the African workers, management had decided to terminate the services of all of them. The works committee tried to present the demands to management, but they responded that it was too late for the committee to do so since management had already made up their minds.

Two days later the dismissed workers fetched their pay packets and were informed that they could reapply for employment at Nautilus if they so wished. According to management they selectively re-employed workers and took back 50 to 60 of the dismissed workers. They also replaced many Africans with Coloured workers.

The Advice Bureau's organisation at Nautilus Marine was shattered by the company's reprisal after the workers went on strike for the second time. Up to that stage Nautilus workers were the strongest and most militant in the Advice Bureau, but the second strike and management's counter-offensive destroyed organisation at the firm completely. Although the company had adopted a hostile stance towards the works committee from the outset and had victimised workers, the Nautilus workers assessed their strength relative to management incorrectly. They had become over-confident and over-aggressive against the counsel from the Advice Bureau. They consequently lost their jobs and considerably impaired the Advice Bureau's organisation and strength.

This was even more the case as the effects of the strike

rippled out wider than only Nautilus Marine. Ex-employees of Nautilus found that they were being harassed by the security police who provided other firms with lists of the Nautilus Marine strike leaders exhorting the firms not to employ these workers. A number of workers subsequently had the experience of being employed by engineering companies in Cape Town's docks one day only to be told the next day that their services would no longer be required. In some cases workers were directly told why they were being dismissed. The most serious harassment was experienced by Mr Ndingane, a particularly outspoken strike leader. Within the course of a month he lost no less than three jobs directly as a result of security police interventions.

In spite of the setback of the second strike the conflict at Nautilus Marine heralded the first action that commenced the transformation of the Advice Bureau to a workers' movement. It also provided valuable lessons to workers and intellectuals in the organisation. In particular they learned that workers' demands could be made in more nuanced ways than all out confrontations with management. This lesson was soon thereafter applied at Masterstreads.

### 3. Struggling to Build a Workers' Movement 1975

During 1975 the Advice Bureau continued with its struggle to transform itself into a workers movement. It realised that, in order to do so, workers themselves would have to build up their strength on the shopfloor. To this end it continued struggling to form statutory works committees and, once they were established, to try and make organisational advances through workers' participation in struggles to have a say over their working lives. Three of the companies where the Advice Bureau engaged in struggles during 1975 were Masterstreads, Lupini

Brothers and Duens Bakery. Although the Advice Bureau did not make any organisational advances at any of the three concerns, it is constructive to consider each of them in order to understand the nature of the challenges facing the Advice Bureau at the time.

Masterreads in Maitland, a tyre retreading company employing about 30 African and 15 Coloured workers, was one of the first places where the Advice Bureau established a works committee under the chairmanship of Daniel Thebe. After the committee was formed, it tried to enter into wage negotiations with management. The company however used a stalling technique and kept putting the date back when they were prepared to discuss wages with the works committee.

Finally the committee and African workers' patience ran out and they organised a go-slow in which workers would try and give the appearance of working normally, but in fact reduce production as much as possible. On the day of the go-slow in February 1975 African workers spent the morning running around very actively, but as unproductively as possible with the result that their output nosedived very sharply. Management soon noticed this and at lunch time Thebe was called in and asked what was happening. Thebe cautiously distanced himself from the action of the workers, but said he thought they were unhappy about their wages. The message was not lost on management and at tea-break they announced that they would engage in talks about wages with the works committee at the end of the week. Production in the plant immediately increased well above its normal level for the remainder of the day.

Although workers successfully forced management's hands through their collective action, they gained a pyrrhic victory in

the end. Over the following months management engaged in a counter-offensive by gradually replacing African with Coloured workers. In so doing they undermined the organisational base of the works committee. By June 1975 only ten African employees were left at the company and the works committee could no longer operate effectively. (13)

Daniel Thebe became an organiser in the Advice Bureau, but was dismissed from the organisation a year later in mid-1976. His dismissal was an important development in the history of the Advice Bureau in that the elected worker representatives exerted their authority over one of the organisers, thereby introducing the practice of ultimate accountability by the organisers to the workers.

An example of the advances the Advice Bureau made in organising works committees as well as the problems it encountered with the strategy is provided by the works committee at Lupini Brothers. Lupini Brothers was in the stonemasonry trade of the building industry and employed a large proportion of contract African workers. Wages and working conditions were subject to the agreement negotiated on the Industrial Council for the Building Industry for the Western Cape. African workers employed by the company were dissatisfied with working conditions and, after making contact with the Advice Bureau early in 1975, decided to establish a works committee.

The chairman of the works committee was Storey Mazwembe, a contract worker who was responsible for putting the workers in touch with the Advice Bureau and who rapidly displayed good organisational abilities. The first action on the part of the works committee was to draw up a list of complaints. This was done in consultation with workers and by going through the Industrial Council Agreement in operation at the time in order to

see if and where the company was infringing its terms and conditions. The initial list of seventeen demands was reduced to nine in order to put the committee in as strong a bargaining position as possible.

The nine 'Complaints of Employees' were submitted to Lupini management in March 1975. They are listed in full below because they give an indication of both the nature of problems the African workers were experiencing and the demands they felt they could make through the works committee.

1. Lupini's employees demand that our wages should be increased. We demand R1,00 per hour for ordinary work.
2. We have complaints about overtime payments. We demand the following overtime rates:
  - (i) Second hour of overtime work from Monday to Thursday, first and second hour of overtime on Friday, and overtime work on Saturday up to 5.00 pm: one and one-third times our hourly wage;
  - (ii) overtime work on Saturday after 5.00 pm, overtime work on Sunday, work on public holidays: one and two-thirds times our hourly wage.
3. When an employee leaves Lupini's, he must be given his Unemployment Insurance Card.
4. Lupini's employees are complaining about the way in which the managing director treats us and requests him to stop assaulting workers.
5. Employees insist on being allowed to receive phone calls from outside.
6. Lupini's employees demand to be paid weekly and that payment takes place before 5.00 pm on Fridays.
7. We complain about the old man who has to carry cement bags. We request that a younger man should assist him.
8. Lupini's employees insist on being paid a travelling allowance when working at building sites that are far from our places of residence.
9. Deductions from our wages for the loss of working tools must not be made. We suggest that the tools should be kept locked up in a tool-store and that a store-keeper must be in charge of the store. (14)

The works committee attained a remarkably high level of success with its demands: management acceded to all the demands

excepting the wage demands. Basic earnings of the workers before the negotiations commenced were 56,5 cents per hour. They demanded R1,00 per hour, but management only agreed to an increase of 10 cents per hour.

In May 1975 Lupini Brothers management however went onto a counter-offensive: on 12 May they called two of the works committee members, one of whom was Storey Mazwembe, and told them that their labour contracts had expired and that the company would not renew them. Both the workers had been in employment for more than ten years with the company and management refused to divulge any reasons for their dismissal to the works committee at a meeting on 28 May. The works committee drew up a memorandum on behalf of the Lupini workers demanding the reinstatement of their two committee members reminding management that it was an offence under the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act to victimise works committee members. (15)

Attempts to mobilise workers after the victimisation of the two committee members by the Advice Bureau however failed for reasons that never became clear. The most likely reason appeared to be the fact that management had successfully chosen the most competent worker leaders to victimise and that other workers were cowed by the managerial offensive. As a result organisation at the company subsequently dwindled away. Storey Mazwembe commenced working as an organiser for the Advice Bureau even though the Department of Bantu Administration refused to allow him to register as an employee with the Bureau.

Duens Bakery, a subsidiary of Bokomo since September 1973, employed about 370 African employees of which 106 worked in the bread department and 130 in delivery in August 1975. (16) The remainder worked in the confectionary and other small departments. In about May 1974 the management of Duens

introduced a liaison committee in order to have communication between management and the workers'. The workers' representatives were selected by foremen in the two largest departments.

In the second half of 1974 the Advice Bureau started organising African workers at Duens Bakery. In December the workers felt confident enough to write a letter signed by 60 of them requesting management to get rid of the existing liaison committee and to replace it with a statutory works committee 'as liaison committee has not been serving the workers' interests at all'.

Management at first adopted an uncompromising position insisting that the liaison committee represented African workers, but then changed their attitude. They proposed that workers should choose, by means of a secret ballot, between a liaison and a works committee. The workers were however opposed to a ballot since many of them were illiterate and they feared that they could be deceived in some way or other. Management however insisted that a secret ballot should be held because they maintained that workers would be intimidated into voting for a works committee. Management nonetheless proceeded to organise and conduct a ballot in May 1975 with the approval of the local Bantu Labour Officer. Workers however boycotted the election and only one worker cast his vote.

The Advice Bureau thereupon decided to intervene more directly on behalf of the workers and wrote a letter to Duens management stating that the company's African employees wished to elect a works committee in terms of Section 7(A) of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act. They included a petition signed by 240 Duens employees, a clear majority, requesting the

formation of a works committee.

Management however persistently insisted on a secret ballot for workers to choose between a liaison and works committee. They organised a second ballot early in August which all the workers except one again boycotted.

The workers thereupon decided to hold a strike in such a manner that they could persuade management to have a works committee elected. In conjunction with the Advice Bureau they organised to commence the strike between 6.00 and 6.30 in the morning, a time when a change of shift occurred. Workers from both shifts would then be present at the firm as would the delivery staff. Workers would then insist that management should allow the election of the works committee there and then, whereupon workers would proceed to work again.

At about 6.00 am on 12 August 125 to 150 Duens workers gathered on the company premises and, when asked by a manager why they were there, a spokesperson replied 'we are here to elect a works committee'. Management however summoned the police who, after talks with Mr Fouche, the administrative manager, persuaded the workers to return to work and disperse after they had been promised that two of their delegates could see Mr Fouche at 2.30 that afternoon. However, before the meeting took place management unilaterally fired four workers including the two delegates whom the workers had chosen to represent them!

The workers were not going to take such blatant victimisation lying down. The following morning they again went on strike on the company premises at 6.00 am, but on this occasion they made two demands: they demanded the reinstatement of the four dismissed workers and the immediate election of a ten-member works committee. The workers' spokesperson, a grey-haired 73 year old man, said to Mr Geyser, the general manager,

'we want works committee, baas, sign for it. Otherwise we rather go to jail'. Members of the South African Police force as well as a White Bantu Labour Officer turned up, but none of them could persuade the workers to disperse until their demands were met. At 10 am the police arrested nineteen of the striking workers and charged them under the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act for illegally taking part in a strike.

The magistrate subsequently found fourteen of the workers guilty and fined them R100 or 90 days suspended for three years. Upon appeal to the Supreme Court the case was set aside on the grounds that the state had failed to prove that the strike was in fact illegal. The judge thought it most probable that a report of the dispute would have been submitted 30 days before the strike to the Bantu Labour officer for the area concerned, thereby making the strike legal.

Although the workers won the court case, they lost the battle for recognition at Duens Bakery. Not only did the workers not gain recognition of their works committee, the organisation of the Advice Bureau at the company also declined. Besides the intransigence of management against its African employees and the Advice Bureau, the state's intervention on the side of management also played a key part in the defeat of the workers.

The Duens dispute revealed very clearly that the Advice Bureau was struggling for recognition against the company as well as the state. This was very clearly demonstrated with the decision of the state to prosecute the workers. During the court proceedings management confessed to both the magistrate and the counsel for the defence that they dismissed the four workers for playing a leading part in the dispute since they acted as

spokespersons for the workers. In spite of having evidence of a clear case of illegal victimisation on the part of Duens management, the state chose not to prosecute the company. Instead, it prosecuted workers for going on a strike that turned out not to be unlawful. The state's intervention however played a major part in destroying the Advice Bureau's organisation at Duens.

In addition to endeavouring to build up organisation at the workplace in 1975 the WPWAB also tried to transform its structures in order to become a worker controlled organisation.

#### 4. Failed Attempts to Institute Workers' Control 1975-76

The intended transformation of the Advice Bureau from a bureaucratic structure to a democratic worker movement turned out to be a more difficult task than the organisation envisaged at the outset. The process began with some intensive discussions amongst the members of WAP and the organisers on the form of organisation that the Advice Bureau should aim to become.

The debate focussed around three issues: the internal structure of the organisation, its role, and its eventual form. The central concern was how to ensure meaningful worker participation as well as democratic worker representation in the Advice Bureau. There was common agreement that workers at factories should elect delegates who would be directly represented on the controlling body of the Advice Bureau. The role of the Advice Bureau was seen as intervening in all spheres of workers' lives, not only the workplace.

Unanimity did not exist over the eventual form of the Advice Bureau. At first it was decided that industrial unions should be aimed at, but the majority view changed to arguing for a general union on the ground that greater worker unity could be

achieved through a general union. Then it was contended by a majority that a general workers' council rather than a general union should be founded. This was argued on two assumptions: that trade unions became bureaucratic organisations whereas workers' councils somehow did not have this tendency, and trade unions tended to become economistic whereas workers' councils retained an integration of economic and political objectives.

Workers were partly exposed to this thinking for the first time in discussions at the training course and in an Abasebenzi of December 1974. In one article a case was made out for a General Union rather than industrial unions. In an editorial on the failed Nautilus strike the unity of all workers in different factories and industries was stressed. The form this unity was to take was through 'General workers' Councils'. (17)

The Advice Bureau and WAP decided to call the first meeting of a Workers' Council on 8 February 1975, but the meeting was postponed to May 1975. Abasebenzi of April 1975 called on workers to elect factory committees because the WPWAB would soon call a 'conference of factory committees' to start a 'General Workers' Council'. The paper asked:

What sort of organization is best suited to bring the factory committees together in unity? This is a matter on which there must be much discussion. But certain rules can be laid down from the beginning. The first is that such an organisation must be directly responsible to the workers in the factories. That is, each factory should elect delegates which carry the workers' instructions to the meetings, and which report back to the workers afterwards. Secondly, the organization must be controlled by the workers and no-one else. This means that the trainers and the 'intellectuals' must be kept firmly in advisory positions; that the organizers must be prevented from exerting undue influence; (18)

Considerable emphasis was placed on training and accountability of worker representatives:

It is important not to under-estimate this training. It is only through training that workers can take their

next step forward. Training helps them to understand HOW they should act and WHEN they should act when expressing the interests of workers... There is a danger that the representative will neglect his duty to inform the workers at his factory of what the other workers are thinking and doing. That is why workers must ensure that their representative always remembers why he has been elected: he is to carry the workers' thoughts to the representatives of the other factories. He is to carry the thoughts of all the other workers back to his own factory. If he does not do his job properly, the workers must immediately replace him with someone who will serve them better. (19)

The article also argued that there was not a division between community and workplace issues:

workers are also beginning to realize that not all their problems begin and end in their factory! Take the matter of bus fares... Bus fares is just one of the many matter that workers in a single factory are powerless to change - but that workers as a group can battle against and win victory!

By May 1975 forty five delegates from twelve factories had met three times to receive training on the Workers' Council'. (20) However, the Workers' Council was still-born and simply failed to develop any life of its own in spite of exhortation from Abasebenzi.

The main reason for the collapse of the Workers' Council was, in the perception of the intellectuals in the Advice Bureau, that it was premature. They considered that it was started before African workers in the Advice Bureau were ready for it. The worker representatives, it was believed, had not yet obtained sufficient experience in factory representation and worker organisation to take the initiative or lead on the Workers' Council. However, it is also possible that the workers could have rejected the Workers' Council on political grounds. There could well have been a perception on their part that the Workers' Council was premature politically and that it would have been too hazardous for the Advice Bureau to embark on such a path so early in its history. They therefore let it die a natural death.

Whatever the precise reasons were for the Council's failure, the project was shelved.

The second attempt to transform the Advice Bureau into a democratic worker organisation was commenced in 1976. Zora Mehlomakulu described it as follows:

Between 1976 and 1977 the WPWAB started a Controlling Committee to get the control of the union out of the officials of the union to the workers by having two representatives in each factory that has members in the union, deciding on any matter affecting the union. Of course, that does not mean that the official of the union has got no say at all, but what there is, is a situation where workers actually take part in controlling the affairs of the union. (21)

Structurally there was no difference between the Workers' Council and Controlling Committee (CC). The basic intention behind them both was to set up a more democratic structure than the existing Executive Committee that was only elected annually at an AGM and not accountable to members. However in principle, the CC was seen more as a body that would try and ensure workers' control of the Advice Bureau than one that would forthwith take up political issues in and beyond the workplace.

In mid-1976 there were also discussions to form area committees based on residential areas. The reasons for this were twofold: firstly to introduce an organisational level between the factory committee and the CC. It was felt that it would be easier to organise workers on a regional basis. Meetings in the townships with the organisers would be greatly facilitated. Secondly, the intention was to decentralise control and training with the organisers, rather than the intellectuals, undertaking the training. In these ways it was believed the Advice Bureau would be less vulnerable to state repression.

However, before the ideas could be properly implemented the Advice Bureau was propelled into political action by the student

revolt in the Cape Peninsula which was sparked off by the events in Soweto in June 1976. When a call was made by students for workers to stay-away from work, the Advice Bureau supported the call. It played a part in planning the stay-aways and managed to persuade the students to delay the timing thereof until Coloured workers would also support it. On the evening of 1 September 1976 an Advice Bureau meeting was held at which the political situation and pending stay-away called for mid-September was being discussed. On occasion strong criticisms were voiced against the state, amongst others by Storey Mazwembe, one of the organisers. At 4.00 am the following morning three organisers, including Mazwembe, and two office bearers were detained by the security police.

The intensity of the repression heightened immensely when it was learned the following day that Storey Mazwembe had died within a few hours of being taken into detention. The inquest into his cell-death returned a verdict that he died by hanging himself with strips he cut from a blanket with a razor-blade he had found in the cell. (22) The two office bearers were released a fortnight later while the two organisers were kept in 'preventative' detention until the end of the year. These detentions, together with the turmoil in the townships made it impossible for the Advice Bureau to continue organising.

In November 1976 the state struck yet another blow at the Advice Bureau when it banned John Frankish who was playing an extensive supportive role, Debbie Budlender, part-time employee of the Advice Bureau, Judy Favish of the Literacy Project, and Jeremy Baskin and Willie Hofmeyer who edited the worker newspapers.

The combination of these repressive acts and the general

turmoil and police aggression in the townships forced the Advice Bureau to cease organising workers in the last quarter of 1976. Thus after experiencing rapid growth and commencing its transformation towards democratic organisation, the Advice Bureau sunk to its nadir at the end of 1976.

#### 5. Transformation of Advice Bureau to General Workers' Union 1977-79

After the disruption of the Advice Bureau's organisation and the intimidation experienced by the events in September and November 1976, it took a considerable period of time to re-establish the workers' committees and the Advice Bureau's organisation. It was only around April 1977 that the organisation was in operation again. From the outset it was decided to carry on with the establishment of a Controlling Committee (CC) and the abolition of the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees. This was achieved in the first half of 1977 when control of the union was formally placed in the hands of the Controlling Committee.

The Committee, which was elected annually, consisted of two elected representatives from each of the organised enterprises in the Advice Bureau. The representatives were to be elected at general meetings of the enterprises. All policy and financial decisions were henceforth to be taken by the CC which met monthly and was constitutionally in control of the work of the organisers as well. White intellectuals who remained in the movement had to regularise their position in the union by being appointed into positions by the CC. They, along with the organisers, became accountable to the CC for what they did. It was decided not to elect an executive committee because of the union's prior experience with its Executive Committee which was

isolated from workers on the shopfloor and did not actively participate in the affairs of the union. (23)

Structurally the Advice Bureau had thus transformed itself into a democratic trade union in 1977. Except for a different terminology its structure as well as principle of placing control of the organisation in the hands of worker representatives was exactly similar to what the FOSATU unions in Transvaal and Natal had done.

After re-establishing its shopfloor organisation during 1977 the Advice Bureau proceeded to consolidate its position in the first three months of 1978. This was partly necessitated by the fact that over the preceding two years many of the older workers, often those with most organisational experience, had been retrenched. The Advice Bureau thereupon encouraged workers at all their organised factories to elect new representatives onto both their factory committees and the Controlling Committee. At newly organised factories workers were still experiencing strong resistance to forming registered works committees from management who wanted to establish liaison committees instead. Where workers were not able to force management to register the statutory works committees their factory committees still operated as democratically elected workers committees (as they were called). (24)

The transformation of the Advice Bureau into a workers' movement was rounded off on 25 June 1978 when it was decided at an Annual General Meeting to change its name to the Western Province General Workers Union (WPGWU). The name of the union was appropriate in that it had continued organising on a general rather than industrial basis: of the eleven factories represented on the Controlling Committee in June 1978, five were in the engineering industry, two in construction, and one each in

the food, textile, commercial and chemical industries. The general character of the union was thus very much in evidence with its strength at that time lying in the engineering industry followed by construction. (25)

Over the next twelve months up to June 1979 the WPGWU remained strongest in the engineering industry with seven factories soundly organised by the end of the period and with contacts established in two more plants. Regular combined meetings of the factories in the industry were also being held by the union. It also made gains in the textile industry by organising a second mill. A noteworthy feature of its organisation in the textile industry was that not only African workers, but some Coloured workers as well, were being organised into the union. The WPGWU was however experiencing problems in the construction industry and failing to make advances. Even in its best organised firm, Dura Construction, the union was finding it extremely hard to maintain a strong organisation because the company employed mainly migrant workers who were subject to victimisation when they came to the end of their contract periods. In that way the union lost many of its worker leaders. In addition the workers were moved around a large number of small sites which also made sustained organisation very difficult for the union.

The industries in which the WPGWU however made the most significant advances over the twelve months period ending in June 1979 were the red meat industry and the three stevedoring firms in Cape Town's docks. Whereas at the start of 1979 only one meat company was organised, the union had organised five meat companies by the end of June. This was due, in large part, to the enthusiastic assistance from workers in the first company to

be organised. A significant feature of its organisation in the meat industry was the fact that Coloured workers were also being organised into the union. The union's organisation in the three stevedoring firms was also advancing apace in spite of attracting considerable police attention. (26) Once a sound organisational base had been established amongst African stevedores, the union proceeded to organise Coloured stevedores as well.

Six months later, in December 1979, the WPGWU had to report its disappointment in its organisational achievements in the engineering and construction industries. Its problems in the construction industry were discussed above. In the engineering industry, a number of its important factories had been weakened considerably. The union attributed its decline to the recession which led to a 'massive reduction in employment'. Furthermore the state's policies of influx control and Coloured employment preference combined to hit the union's organisation in the industry very hard, as the union explained:

Our organised base in this sector has rested strongly upon the African workers and the recession has resulted in large scale substitution of Coloured workers for African workers. Implementation of this policy is felt most keenly by the contract (migrant) workers... In most of our factories the backbone of union strength is found in the migrant labour force and we have accordingly experienced difficulty... (27)

In the textile industry the union held its own over the six months ending in December 1979 while it continued to expand regionally by organising workers in Paarl in the Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM) and Roads Department of the Provincial Administration.

The two industries in which the WPGWU continued to make considerable progress in the second half of 1979 were the meat and stevedoring industries. By the end of the year the union had no less than nine organised factories in the red meat

industry as well as the active support of at least 80% of the stevedores in Cape Town's harbour. Their combined action had brought about the greatest organisational advance of the WPGWU up to that time. How this came about is considered next.

#### 6. Organising Stevedores and gaining Recognition 1979

Before the advent of the WPGWU working conditions on the docks left much to be desired. Dock workers, in demand of better wages and working hours, refused to work overtime in October 1972 and again in October 1974. As a result a new system was introduced in December 1974 that guaranteed stevedores a minimum of R22,20 per week if there was no work. With overtime work on Sunday a worker could earn a maximum of R47,74 per week. (28) In the mid-1970s a substantial proportion of Cape Town's docks was converted to cope with containerised loading and offloading. This led to a radical reduction of stevedores over this period from about 1800 down to 600. Many dockworkers were laid off at 24 hours notice regardless of length of service and without any severance pay. (29)

Organisation at the Cape Town's stevedores was undertaken by Zora Mehlomakulu who described her experiences and the problems she encountered in the following way:

I went to the stevedores although it is very difficult to find them. At a particular time when they are actually coming out I could speak to one of them... and told them that I have got some intention of having them organised into a union. So, naturally, because they had representation that never truly represented them, some of them were apathetic and thought 'stupid woman that wanted to organise' and many other things. And some of them actually got keen. So I invited a few of them to the office and they came...

They asked if I could visit the hostel. I visited them and tried to arrange a meeting. the management would never allow a meeting in the hostel. So we chose a certain open space in the township and in that meeting I had about 80 people attending and actually told them about the union and my intention of organising them.

The 80 people that attended the meeting were very keen, so we called after that a series of Saturday meetings. In each meeting 20 people were being added. Also attempts were made at going to the hostels and raking up more people with almost door to door organisation until there was a very big meeting.

It was only African workers at this time. I enquired from them whether there was Coloured workers. They said yes, but they were outnumbered by the Black workers. I asked them about the possibility of speaking to them. Some said the Coloureds were keen but were afraid of coming to the townships. Some said including Coloureds now would take us back. That issue was actually controversial because some of them were in a better position and they were likely to jeopardise the rest of the workers' position. With the last strike the Coloureds played a role that led to their detriment... The workers would want the Coloureds to be organised, but would fear because of their position they would be on the management side. (30)

In the end the African stevedores decided that the union should organise the Coloured stevedores as well. The union subsequently attained considerable success in organising the Coloured stevedores. At the beginning of 1979 it intensified its organisational drive amongst the stevedores. By the end of March regular weekly meetings with 200 stevedores on average were being held. (31)

The organised stevedores and WPGWU felt that they were strong enough to commence demanding recognition from management. The union wrote to the stevedoring companies on 1 May 1979 demanding that each of the three companies convenes a meeting of their workers who wanted to elect a representative committee. Although there were three stevedoring companies, namely South African Stevedore Services Company (SASSCO), Grindrod-Cotts and Rennies, in existence at that time, the stevedores were not formally employed by them. Instead, they were employed by the Cape Town Stevedores Association (CTSA) which was affiliated to the national employers' association, the South African Stevedores Council (SASC). The union received a reply from one of the

companies claiming it had a liaison committee and was informed that it had to deal with CTSA and not with the individual companies.

In the next round of the struggle the stevedores elected a representative committee under the auspices of the WPGWU in August and the union wrote to the CTSA forwarding the names of the committee members and demanding that 'the Association meet with all the stevedores in order to discuss the relationship between the committee, on the one hand, and the Association and the three companies, on the other hand'. (32) Instead of convening a meeting the CTSA replied to the union stating that '... until such time as your Union becomes registered..., we will not have any further dealings with our establishment. However, after registration, we will have no objection to dealing with any organisation of which more than 50 per cent of our workers are members in good standing'. (33) The union thereupon sent CTSA a list of members in good standing that comprised somewhat more than 50 per cent of the stevedores, but received a reply back reiterating that they would not negotiate with the union until it was registered.

By then the mood of the stevedores was becoming increasingly angry and the third round of the struggle led them to take direct action. In mid-November the union was contacted by Freight Services Management, the holding company of SASSCO. The holding company indicated that it found itself in strong disagreement with the approach of SASSCO and requested a meeting with union officials to discuss aspects of union and company policy. The stevedores agreed to this request provided the SASSCO committee representatives were present and a meeting was set up for 3 December 1979. However, three days before the scheduled meeting Freight Services cancelled the meeting indicating that they were

compelled to do so under pressure from SASC.

That was the last straw as far as the stevedores were concerned. At a mass meeting attended by approximately 400 workers they decided to present management with an ultimatum that at 6.00 am on Tuesday, 11 December, the stevedores 'would gather outside the offices of the CTSA in order to hold the meeting which they had demanded over the past seven months'. (34) The stevedores carried out their ultimatum, but the manager of CTSA refused to negotiate with them. Thereupon the stevedores indicated that they would not work that day, but would all return to work the following day. The one day work stoppage was heeded by all the stevedores who also all returned to work the following day thereby demonstrating a strong discipline and solidarity to management.

As a result of the workers' action the CTSA manager flew to Durban to consult with the SASC where the employers decided to back down and indicated that they would be willing to 'talk and listen to worker representatives, including all registered and unregistered trade unions'. (35) Management also called a meeting with the stevedores informing them that their committee would be recognised.

Management still had one card up their sleeves. As a last desperate bid they advised workers on Friday, 14 December, to attend a meeting called by TUCSA on the following day. It was the same day on which the WPGWU had also called a mass meeting of stevedores. In spite of a pamphlet distributed by TUCSA informing the stevedores that they would be given the opportunity to join a 'responsible' and 'registered' union at their meeting, only one worker attended the TUCSA meeting while over 300 workers attended the WPGWU meeting. At the mass meeting the stevedores

decided to join and support the WPGWU, confirmed in office their elected committee, and approved a constitution drafted previously by the committee and union officials.

The final form the constitution of the Cape Town Stevedores Committee (CTSC) was negotiated with the CTSA since it also entailed relationships with management. The constitution contained the following provisions: it laid down that the Committee would consist of fifteen elected members, with five from each company. The rights of the Committee recognised by the employers included the following: to negotiate with management over wages and working conditions, to consider management proposals affecting conditions of service before any changes are made by management, to hold Committee meetings outside of working hours on company premises with the prior approval of management, to have meetings with management during normal working hours with normal pay, for Committee members to exercise their functions as representatives during working hours after informing their immediate supervisors, to institute grievance and dismissal procedures agreed upon by both management and the Committee, and protection of committee members against victimisation.

The formal recognition and rights accorded to the union in the constitution appeared to be very limited. The union was nowhere mentioned by name in the constitution. There was only reference to the 'representative union' and the only role accorded to the representative union was that the the Committee could instruct officials thereof to attend meetings of the Committee with management of the companies and the CTSA. The officials only had observer status, which was the right to attend meetings, but not the right to participate in the proceedings, except in the case of meetings with the Association where they

could have full negotiating rights provided there was mutual agreement between the local employers and the Committee. (36)

The reasons why the union was not granted formal recognition with the officials only having observer status were, in part, a compromise: two of the stevedoring companies were opposed to recognising the union. (37) On the other hand the union accepted observer status because, in line with the union's policy, 'observer status places squarely on the shoulders of the workers of the union, and not the officials of the union, the responsibility for negotiating with and, in general, confronting their bosses'. (38) The union also preferred reference to the 'representative union' rather than the Western Province General Workers' Union because it wanted all stevedores (and not only union members) to be able to participate in elections of the Committee, and because it believed that it should only be entitled to exercise the rights accorded by the constitution to the union as long as it remained truly representative. (39)

In practice, however, the WPGWU gained considerable rights from the CTSA. Union officials were never refused permission to attend meetings where they always had full participation rights. In addition it was granted access onto the docks for collecting subscriptions once a month, to hold caucus meetings with committee members during working time, permission for organisers to enter stevedores hostels and hold general meetings there, and to train stevedores on issues such as health and safety during working hours. (40)

Additional rights were subsequently entrenched by the committee. It negotiated a series of Procedures with the CTSA. These were Grievance, Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedures as well as Lay-off and Retrenchment Procedures. A particular

achievement at the time was the Lay-off and Retrenchment Procedure which specified that lay-offs would be applied in preference to retrenchment. A system of unpaid long leave with guaranteed re-employment was instituted with an additional mechanism of cycling employees through two week periods of unpaid leave should the demand for labour drop below the supply reduced by voluntary lay-offs. Retrenchment would work on the principle of 'last in first out' with one month's notice to retrenched workers. Before serving notice on retrenched workers the Committee has the right to negotiate with management in order to 'minimise the effects of any intended retrenchment'. (41)

In subsequent years the wages and working conditions of stevedores were improved considerably through negotiations by the union and the Stevedores Committee. The number of stevedores in employment also fell, but this was almost entirely due to the switch to containerisation in Cape Town harbour. The union also expanded its organisation of stevedores after 1980 to all the major urban harbours in South Africa thereby building its power base firmly in the transport industry.

The WPGWU also used the recognition of the CISC by the CTSA as a powerful argument against the registration of independent unions. It could point out that it had effectively gained recognition from management as an unregistered union and had ensured that workers' control was retained in the Stevedores Committee. (42) This issue, which relates to both the union's strategies for power and democracy in the union, is considered below. Before that the organisational level which the WPGWU had attained by the end of 1979 is sketched out.

## 7. The WPGWU in December 1979

At the end of 1979 the WPGWU had an effective membership of 3000 although it had a claimed membership of 8000. By effective membership was meant signed up members who were properly organised and not mere card-holders of the union. In spite of making considerable headway in organising Coloured stevedores with all 200 of them becoming members, the union did not recruit many Coloured workers. Of the total of 3000 organised members only about 275 were Coloured workers. (43) Paid up membership during 1979 was also extremely low with only about 180 members, or 6% of the effective membership, paying monthly subscriptions on average over the year.

There were two reasons that accounted for the union's low paid up membership figures. The first was that it did not have any check-off facilities and thus collected subscriptions by hand. Although the union was strongly committed to collecting workers' subscriptions directly, this inevitably resulted in lower paid up membership than would have been the case with check-off facilities. The second, and more important reason, was that the union was very successful in raising funds from international bodies which obviated the need for it to rely on workers' subscriptions as a source of revenue.

Table 1 provides an indication of the extent to which the WPGWU was successful in raising funds from external sources. In 1973 and 1974 all the donations, which came to the union via the Wages Commission of the University of Cape Town, amounted to R1800 in 1973 and R4000 in 1974. From 1975 onwards the union raised money from overseas trade unions through contact with the ICFTU. In 1975 and 1976 the amounts were still relatively small. In 1975 at least R3267 was raised and in 1976 at least R5649 from the ICFTU by means of a Joint Fund-raising Committee

with the IAS in Johannesburg and the IIE in Durban which all applied jointly for funds from British and West European trade unions. In 1977 the sum raised overseas increased to R19678, but it was in the following two years that fund-raising in the WPGWU rose dramatically to R105000 in 1978 and R81000 in 1979. These enormous sums of money were raised in order to beat the provisions of the Fund-Raising Act of 1978 before they came into operation. The Act was aimed at prohibiting the collection of funds from inside and outside the country unless the organisation was authorised to do so as a registered welfare organisation or similar institution.

The success of the union in raising international donations, meant that workers' subscriptions remained a small proportion of total union expenditure from its foundation in 1973 up to 1979. As Table 1 demonstrates, for the first four years subscriptions ranged between 12 and 18 per cent of total expenditure. Then, from 1977 to 1979, it dropped sharply to constitute only 4 to 6 per cent of total expenditure in the union. Even as a proportion of salaries alone, workers' subscriptions averaged only 10 per cent on average during this period.

Because workers' subscriptions constituted such a small proportion of the union's salaries one of the mechanisms through which workers' control could potentially have been imposed on union organisers, namely through their money paying the organisers' wages, was not available to the workers in the WPGWU up to 1979. The union realised that it was unhealthy for it to be so dependent on international funding and as from 1980 it commenced to take the raising of workers' subscriptions far more seriously. (44)

**Table 1**  
**Annual Income and Expenditure of WPGWU 1973-79**  
**Selected Variables**

YEAR	INCOME		EXPENDITURE			Total Expenditure
	Subscriptions	Donations	Salaries gratuities	Travel Transport	Salaries + Transport	
1973	236	1800	1275	n.a.	-	2000
1974	519	4060	2070	n.a.	-	4060
1975	1108	3267	3910	n.a.	-	4615
1976	902	5649	4746	345	5091	5907
1977	680	19678	5872	1733	7605	10687
1978	909	105196	9796	3392	13188	22201
1979	1609	80834	17168	6933	24101	35994

	Subscriptions as Percentage of:			Salaries + Transport	Total Expenditure
	Salaries				
1973	.	.	19	-	12
1974	.	.	25	-	13
1975	.	.	28	-	18
1976	.	.	19	18	15
1977	.	.	12	9	6
1978	.	.	9	7	4
1979	.	.	9	7	5

**Sources:** Financial Reports to Board of Trustees,  
 Financial Statements to Controlling Committee,  
 Audited Annual Financial Statements for 1977-80.

**Notes to Table 1**

1. 1973 is for the period Febr 1973 to Jan 1974.
2. Donations and Total Expenditure are estimates for 1973. They are based on salary and rent calculations.
3. Subscriptions for 1974 is extrapolated from July to Dec 1974 which was R259,25.
4. Donations and Total Expenditure for 1974 based on an application for funds by the Board of Trustees to Wages Commission.
5. Salaries for 1974 an extrapolation from three months' salary in 1974.
6. Salaries for 1975 an extrapolation of seven months' salary in 1975.
7. Total Expenditure for the period July 1974 to Sept 1975.

The WPGWU had seventeen factory committees which were deemed to be sufficiently organised to be represented on the Controlling Committee by the end of 1979. A factory was considered to be sufficiently organised to be on the CC when more than half of the African workers in the factory had been signed up and some

subscriptions were being raised. The WPGWU officials considered a factory to be well organised when at least half of the workers in the factory had been signed on as members, if the members had elected a factory committee which was attending training meetings, if the committee regularly held general meetings of its factory members and if its Controlling Committee delegates regularly attended meetings. By these criteria no less than fourteen of the seventeen factories represented on the Controlling Committee at the end of 1979 were deemed to be well organised by Di Cooper, a union organiser. (45)

At that time the union was employing four full time organisers as well as two education officers who were effectively operating as organisers as well. The education officers concentrated on training factory committees in preparation for meetings with management. The training thus built up the organisational strength of the factory committees. In addition to that the union relied heavily on volunteers in 1979. These were union members who organised workers over the weekends and in the evenings, a task which they did with considerable success.

The general nature of the union was still very much in evidence at the end of 1979. Of the seventeen factory committees represented on the Controlling Committee four were from the meat industry, three each were in stevedoring, engineering and in construction, two in textile companies, and one each in the chemical industry and the public sector (ESCOM). Whereas the union still had a reasonably strong but waning base in engineering and construction, its greatest strength at the end of 1979 was with the Cape Town stevedores with the meat industry with considerable strength and making rapid further advances. The following year was however to see the complete demise of the

union's organisation in the meat industry as all its African meat workers came out in the first solidarity strike by the independent unions and were all dismissed as a result. On the other hand the union consolidated and extended its organisation of stevedores to the other major harbour cities in the country.

Having presented the WPGWU's history from its origin in 1973 to the end of 1979, it remains to analyse the union's strategies for power and the level of internal democracy it had attained over this period.

## 8. Democracy and Strategies for Power in the WPGWU

### 8.1 Structural Transformation: Democratic Workers' Control and White Intellectuals

The extent to which the WPGWU had succeeded in establishing democratic workers' control in the union and its strategies to enhance its power were so interrelated that they are considered together. Because the details have been spelled out in the exposition above, only broad themes are discussed and analysed in this section.

The founders of the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau, forerunner to the Western Province Workers' General Workers' Union, did have the intention of creating an organisation that would eventually be controlled democratically by its worker members. When it was started its structures and policy were firmly in the hands of White intellectuals in the movement. Although former SACTU officials and members played an important part in gaining workers' support and recruiting them into the Advice Bureau, the determination of the structure and policy of the Advice Bureau as well as its finance, administration and organisational strategies were controlled by the White intellectuals. Zora Mehlomakulu, general secretary and organiser, however had considerable say over organisational

issues.

From the outset in 1973 the Advice Bureau sought to lay the foundations on which meaningful worker participation could be built. Right from the start there was a general conviction that it had to be based on factory committees whose members were elected by the workers and who were to be kept accountable to workers by means of general factory meetings. Because of the repressive political circumstances prevailing at the time, the factory committees took the form of statutory works committees which were democratic in form and allowed for democratic practices as well. In addition to the committees the union also placed a great emphasis on participation of the rank and file in shopfloor organisation. It achieved this by holding general meetings of all the members of each organised factory on a monthly basis, as Dave Lewis explained.

The structure of the union doesn't actually start with factory committees, it starts with the general, so called, the rank and file. There is an incredibly strong accent in the union on general factory meetings.  
(46)

Throughout the period under consideration in this thesis, and in subsequent years, the WPGWU did not deviate from its policy of trying to build its strength on democratic worker participation through factory committees. The Advice Bureau initially made fairly rapid progress in organising enterprises and establishing works committees. Within two years of being founded the leadership of the Advice Bureau believed that organisation at the workplace was sufficiently strong to transform the organisation into a worker controlled movement.

After intensive discussions amongst the intellectuals in the Advice Bureau it was decided to create a General Workers' Council consisting of elected delegates from each of the organised factories. In the minds of its founders, the Council

would not confine itself to workplace issues, but take up issues affecting other aspects of the workers' lives as well. Although the factories elected delegates and the Workers' Council met three times up to May 1975, the movement did not get off the ground for reasons that never became very clear. The two most probable reasons were either that the factory committees were not yet well enough established to take control of the movement or that workers felt it was not appropriate at that stage to start an organisation that was foreseen to play a more direct political role.

The second attempt to transform the structures of the Advice Bureau into a democratically worker-controlled organisation commenced in 1976 and was successfully brought to completion in 1977. On this occasion it was envisaged to create a Controlling Committee consisting of two representatives from each of the enterprises elected at general meetings of the enterprises. Control of the central affairs of the Advice Bureau would be placed in the hands of the Controlling Committee. Structurally there was not any difference between the Controlling Committee and the General Workers' Council, but politically the Controlling Committee was expected to concentrate on workplace issues for the time being.

Except for the interruptions created by the stay-away, political turmoil and state harassment of the Advice Bureau late in 1976, the Controlling Committee was successfully launched in 1977 with control constitutionally firmly placed in the Committee's hands. Thus within four years of being founded the Advice Bureau had successfully transformed itself into a movement in which control of the organisation was formally and structurally placed in the hands of elected worker

representatives. This did not however mean that they actually exercised control in practice. There were many reasons why control did not reside exclusively or even mainly in their hands.

One of the reasons lay in the fact that the Controlling Committee could initially consist of any two representatives from an enterprise. As a result workers frequently chose representatives who were not on the factory committees in order to share out responsibilities between the workers. However, the result was that such representatives were unable to participate meaningfully in the affairs of the Controlling Committee because they lacked the experience and knowledge to do so. The unintended consequence of this attempt to approximate a form of participatory democracy was to reduce democracy because more influence was thereby placed in the hands of knowledgeable and experienced organisers. In order to overcome this limitation the constitution of the WPGWU was amended in about 1979. It laid down that Controlling Committee members had to be factory representatives. They were still elected by general meetings of the enterprises, but in practice most general meetings followed the recommendations of the factory committees in electing the Controlling Committee representatives. (47)

Another reason why control of the union did not reside in the hands of the Controlling Committee was because the union decided not to elect an executive committee in order to ensure direct democratic participation by all the factory delegates. However, an unintended consequence of the decision was that the control of the union remained in the hands of the intellectuals and organisers. As John Frankish explained:

It was initially thought not to have an executive because of our experience with an executive in the past. It was really an attempt to enforce democracy to prevent decisions being taken in isolation. We found that the problem is a difficulty finding a balance between

democracy and leadership. In enforcing this democracy the real leadership in fact remains in the hands of the staff because one doesn't have the workers with enough ongoing knowledge on the day to day activities in order to really take over leadership. (48)

In order to overcome this problem an Executive Committee of seven members was elected in 1980. It met once a week with union officials and was granted administrative, not policy-making, powers in order to deal with ongoing union matters.

A deeper structural reason why democratic workers' control could not be implemented in practice in the WPGWU was the socio-political configuration of its members and officials. At the one extreme there were university-trained intellectuals, all of whom were White up to the end of 1979. They were few in number, ranging from about ten in the first couple of years down to about five from mid-1976 onwards. Although none of them could speak Xhosa, they were extremely influential. On the other extreme there were the African members of the WPGU, particularly the migrant workers, who had very little or no education. Not only was a large proportion of them illiterate, but many of them were not conversant with English either.

No systematic survey of the social characteristics of the WPGWU's membership has ever been done, but a survey of 211 African workers in Cape Town conducted by Janet Graaff and myself during 1975-6 serve to give some indication of the educational background of the union's members at the time. The educational level of the African workers surveyed in the sample was found to vary with the legal status, and hence social background, of the workers. Half the African workers who were born and raised in Cape Town (those with section 10(1)(a) rights under the Bantu (now Black) (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act) had schooling up to or less than the end of primary school (standard 5), while half the Africans not born in Cape Town, but who had been in

continuous employment in Cape Town for at least ten years (those with Section 10(1)(b) rights) had received less than or up to a standard 3 education, whereas half the migrant workers had less than or up to four years education at most, a level that is generally not considered sufficient to ensure literacy. Furthermore almost a third of the migrant workers had in fact received no formal education at all. (49)

Between these two extremities were a small handful of African leaders who had former direct trade union and political experience. Initially only one of them, Zora Mehloakulu, was openly involved and employed by the Advice Bureau as general secretary and organiser while the others kept an informal contact with the union. Mehloakulu was influential from the start in organisational issues of the Advice Bureau. From 1975 onwards other African leaders emerged in the union. Some of them, notably Alpheus Ndude and Reverend Marawu, were recruited from outside while others such as Wilson Sidina and Storey Mazwembe rose from the ranks of the workers. These African leaders themselves came to play the role of intellectuals in the organisation. They therefore tempered the influence of White intellectuals to some extent.

In spite of the socio-political composition of the Advice Bureau, the White intellectuals did not have unrestricted power and influence in the organisation. This was not only because of the presence of experienced African leadership in the union, but also because the rank and file workers often had considerable political and economic awareness as well as a keen sense of what was in their interest. White intellectuals were therefore constrained by the rank and file to act in the workers' interests. In spite of these constraints there were still

certain features of the social composition of the union that tended to place a disproportionate amount of influence in the hands of the White intellectuals.

Firstly, the vast difference in educational levels linked with the lack of comprehension and literacy in English on the part of most African migrant workers placed the workers in a very dependent situation vis-a-vis the intellectuals in the movement. The workers had to rely on the intellectuals to inform them what their legal rights were in terms of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act, how the industrial relations system operated in South Africa, and the most appropriate organisational strategy to adopt. The way in which the intellectuals chose to explain these issues crucially affected the decision subsequently made by workers. Even when the Controlling Committee came into operation in 1977 and many of the elected worker representatives had by then gained considerable experience and knowledge from their years of involvement in the Advice Bureau, the intellectuals still inadvertently dominated the policy decisions taken by the Committee. How this could happen was explained by the general secretary of the WPGWU since 1978, Dave Lewis, as follows in 1983 when the problem of intellectual domination still existed in the Controlling Committee:

Basically I suppose it would still be relatively easy, definitely not as easy as it was in the past, but it still is within the realm of possibility for someone even to use a tone of voice, a cynical sort of attitude, that will very heavily influence certain people... If you want to take a vote on the Controlling Committee, a kind of dismissive and cynical tone of voice, an accentuation of certain facts and leaving out others, can determine the issue. (50)

Secondly, the socio-political conditions prevailing in the country in which Whites were the dominant [ruling group and Africans the dominated oppressed group had definite consequences for the union. African workers had been socialised in such a

society to assume positions and roles of subordination to Whites. There was a tendency for them to do so in the union as well and cede to the White intellectuals key controlling roles in the organisation. In the final instance, according to Dave Lewis, the problem was really a political one:

The underlying structural problem is a huge political problem, the problem of the oppressed not often being involved in decision-making and to facilitate a situation where they know that it is their right to actually take the final decision. That is really the problem, it is not the role of Whites or the role of intellectuals. (51)

Lewis thus perceived the roots of the problem to reduce the influence of intellectuals and increase the workers' real control of the union as political. He was however also of the opinion that the WPGWU faced an irresolvable problem although there was a legitimate role for White intellectuals in the union:

I used to believe naively that we're going to reach the level where we eliminated intellectuals from the organisation. I don't think we'll ever be entirely successful because we'll never remove that kind of contradiction in society. I am not sure the elimination of intellectuals is desirable either. I don't think the role of university-based White intellectuals is illegitimate in the struggle, but its got to be treated as a contradiction. There has been a tendency amongst some unions where there are Whites involved to say we are a non-racial union, therefore it is not a question. Anybody who says that is crazy. I think it is a question whether one likes it or not. (52)

But the dominant role of White intellectuals when the Advice Bureau was started became more restricted and shared by others as the organisation progressed. Besides the structural transformation of the union in which final decision-making in terms of the vote was placed in the hands of worker representatives, the structures and practices of the union also allowed worker leadership to emerge from the rank and file. Often some of the stronger worker leaders would end up as organisers having either been victimised or drawn out of their

factories to assist the union in a more full-time capacity. This was the case with organisers such as Daniel Thebe, Storey Mazwembe and Wilson Sidina, a former employee of Gearing Foundries. The experience and training of such organisers as well as worker leaders in the factories, led them to express their views and argue over their differences of opinion with the intellectuals with increasing vigour.

An aspect of union organisation in which intellectuals did not dominate was in the relationship between factory committees and management. (53) Furthermore, the independence and strength of these committees, particularly in the stevedoring and meat industries, brought worker leaders into the Controlling Committee who operated from their own power base and were consequently more assertive in arguing their differences of opinion with the intellectuals. Thus although the intellectuals remained very influential in the WPGWU up to the end of 1979, they were operating within constraints set by the structures, practices and people developed in and through the union.

In addition, there was an awareness in the union, especially on the part of white intellectuals, of their dominant role in the union. According to Frankish, the union tried to overcome this domination by consistently adopting the policy that, if there were more than one way of doing something within the union, the method that would strengthen democracy and increase workers' control would be adopted. (54) This approach accounted for the union's policy on recognition and registration.

## 8.2 Recognition and Registration

The essence of the WPGWU's strategy for power was to attain it by means of democratic worker participation on the shopfloor. Although the two objectives of power and democracy essentially

reinforced each other, there were certain strategic areas in which they had to be played off against each other. In such cases the union tended to place too much emphasis on democratic workers control, at times almost fetishising democracy above all else, and consequently ended up weakening rather than strengthening itself. This happened with regard to the union's recognition and registration policies.

The union's recognition policy as it existed at the end of 1979 grew out of its initial policy to form statutory works committees. Only elected worker representatives could serve on these plant-based committees and negotiate with management. Union organisers were thus always excluded from negotiations with management. This legal restriction had the effect of democratising and strengthening the union at the shopfloor level. Workers, who were elected as representatives onto the committees, could more easily be kept accountable to the rank and file because of their daily contact with each other on the shopfloor. At the same time the worker representatives had to develop sufficient courage, knowledge and expertise with which to face management across the negotiating table.

This practice was gradually raised to a principle in the WPGWU. The principle was that the union wanted management to perceive clearly that the union was controlled by workers and that organisers were not allowed to usurp the role of negotiation which was deemed to be the exclusive preserve of worker representatives in the union:

Management must see at every step along the way that the union to which the workers belong is controlled by the workers themselves... In other words a demand for recognition must always be governed by one overriding principle, namely: it is never the function of union officials to negotiate for the workers; it is never the function of the union secretariat or bureaucracy to substitute itself for the workers. Rather, the function

of the union officials is to ensure that the workers possess the necessary 'skills' and self-confidence to face management themselves. (55)

As a result, the union's approach was generally to get management to recognise a workers' committee elected under the auspices of the union, and not recognition of the union as such:

This initial approach consists in demanding of management that they recognise the workers' democratically elected committee, a committee elected under the auspices of the union. (56)

Such an approach towards recognition the WPGWU placed workers' representatives completely in charge of negotiations with management. Since the representatives were drawn from the shopfloor they could be kept accountable more easily and thoroughly than could union officials. Thus the union's policy was designed to optimise democratic workers' control in shopfloor negotiations with management. However the practice of excluding organisers from negotiating with the workers' committees weakened the union's bargaining power. This was because the organisers were more independent than worker representatives who could always potentially be victimised and organisers usually had greater experience and expertise than workers. As organisers they had the time and indeed the responsibility to prepare themselves more thoroughly to face management than workers could. In 1983 Dave Lewis was of the opinion that the presence of organisers did sometimes strengthen the union's bargaining position. He explained why this was the case as follows:

Sometimes bargaining is very complex and officials are in a position to provide a broader perspective, broader arguments, gather research material and all that sort of thing. (57)

An analysis of the minutes of a meeting between the Stevedores Committee and the Stevedores Association bore this out as well. The finding was that, while the organisers attending the meeting spoke only about a quarter the number of times that

Committee members spoke, their points were more penetrating than those of the Committee members. (58)

The WPGWU's intensive commitment to democratic workers' control of the union also led it to adopt a very firm stance against registration. The union expressed this very clearly:

Our principal reason for rejecting registration lies in our uncompromising commitment to workers control, to internal democracy within our union. We are convinced that the requirements for registration presuppose that the workers voluntarily relinquish exclusive control over their unions. (59)

It was not only the union's commitment to democracy that made it oppose registration. There was also hostility from rank and file union members who had a deep mistrust of registering their union with the state. The roots of some of this suspicion lay with workers' former experiences with the Department of Labour which tried to foist registered liaison committees onto them. (60)

After the Wiehahn Commission Report and amending legislation had been passed the WPGWU released a memorandum on 22 October 1979 in which it came out strongly against registration. In the memorandum it argued that the independent unions' strength was based on their democratic practices, but this strength would be undermined by registering:

The unusual strength of the unregistered unions... rests precisely in the democratic functioning of the unions; it rests precisely on the fact that our unions are controlled by the workers. (61)

By registration we will be precisely compelled to give up that factor which has accounted for our success to date, namely our organised strength in each factory. (62) (Emphasis in the original)

In the memorandum the WPGWU however seriously overestimated the controls which the state would be able to impose on unions that registered. Among the 'more blatant' of the 'web of control and supervision' the union included the Industrial Court,

'financial controls, possible vetoing of election and appointment of office bearers and officials, etc.', (63) none of which subsequently materialised. It has been contended that it was precisely because of the opposition to registration on the part of the WPGWU and other independent unions that the state did not impose such rigid controls. The argument however overlooks the role of other actors in the field and seems to have been based on reading more into the law than was actually there.

After meeting with other independent unions on 3 November 1979 in Johannesburg and being challenged by FOSATU that it had exaggerated the controls inherent in registration, the WPGWU added an 'Additional Comment' to its memorandum in which it came to the conclusion that

it appears to be generally agreed that the real controls in the entire industrial relations system are contained in participating in the Industrial Councils themselves.  
(64)

Although the union held strong views on the disadvantages of entering industrial councils, it did not advance any arguments in the memorandum or 'Additional Comment' on why or how democratic workers' control of the independent unions would be undermined in industrial councils. The argument that it did advance, however, was that the unions would weaken their bargaining strength on industrial councils:

What will we have to give in return for a seat on the Industrial Council? No less than our strength.  
(65)

It forces us into a prescribed round of bargaining at the level of the total industry - i.e., at a level at which the bosses are 100% organised and yet at which the black unions are very weak. (66)

The merits and demerits of registration were extensively debated between the WPGWU and others in the pages of the South African Labour Bulletin. (67) They will therefore not be gone into here except to analyse the implications of the argument of

the WPGWU for union democracy and power.

While the WPGWU was correct in identifying its strength in active worker participation in the workplace as well as democratic workers' control of the union, it made a mistake in casting the debate on registration exclusively in terms of maintaining internal democracy and workers' control in the union. By focussing so heavily on democracy it tended to obscure other objectives of the independent unions, such as attaining greater power, and ignored other strategies through which unions could potentially gain power, such as using legal concessions by the state. The controls on democracy in the unions which registration would bring were also completely exaggerated. The result was that the WPGWU could therefore not properly evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of registering in terms of the different goals it held as an independent union.

Furthermore, even though the WPGWU did argue that the unions would be weakened by joining industrial councils, how registration would effect the overall strength of the unions was not considered. There was also the assumption that the independent unions would be the weaker party in all industrial councils they may end up joining if they were to register. While this certainly was the case with the industrial council in the engineering industry, this was not necessarily the case with many of the smaller regional and local industrial councils. It was within the power of some independent unions to dominate these smaller industrial councils and potentially use them to their own advantage.

The WPGWU also obfuscated and even hid the role of leadership and, in particular, of intellectual leadership, in the unions even though it was not their intention to do so. While

its aim in opposing registration was precisely to prevent the domination of the independent unions by experts, it gave the impression that the independent unions had all established democratic workers control. This was however not the case as most of them were either still heavily influenced by intellectuals or, as in the case of the Consultative Committee unions, controlled by their secretaries and executive committees. The difficult challenge of finding a balance between democracy and intellectual leadership in the independent unions was therefore not addressed and assumed to be unproblematic.

#### Problems Organising Coloured Workers and being a General Union

As a union committed to non-racialism the WPGWU did not only have to face the question of the role of White intellectuals in the movement, but also grapple with the problem of organising Coloured workers successfully. At the outset the Advice Bureau's strategy of organising statutory works committees had excluded the possibility of organising Coloured workers. Although the strategy was justifiable as a way of overcoming African workers' fears of trade unionism, it severely inhibited the Advice Bureau's ability to build itself into a powerful working class organisation with a united African and Coloured base. The exclusion of Coloured workers considerably weakened the potential power base of the union since they formed a majority of workers in the Cape Peninsula (49% in 1970) while African workers constituted a relatively small minority (14% in 1970). The growth potential and therefore strength of the Advice Bureau was thus severely hampered. Management was also able to play off Coloured workers against Africans by replacing militant African with Coloured workers as happened after the go-slow at Master treads. Such action clearly weakened the Advice

Bureau. It was also more difficult later on for the union to recruit and organise Coloured workers and foster solidarity between them and African workers. United black working class action was subsequently harder to obtain.

The WPGWU thus did not make much headway in organising Coloured workers up to 1979. Coloured membership at the end of 1979 was less than 300 out of an effective membership of about 3000. The external factors which contributed to the union's lack of progress on this front were, according to the general secretary of the WPGWU, firstly, a 'grotesque' understanding of trade unionism which TUCSA unions had imbued in Coloured workers. Through many decades of operation in the Western Cape the TUCSA unions had instilled a cynical attitude in Coloured workers towards trade unionism in which they viewed unions merely as benefit societies without developing any notion of shopfloor struggle on their part. Secondly, in two of the industries in which the WPGWU had established a strong presence, namely engineering and construction, Coloured employees were artisans and in supervisory positions and therefore removed from African workers in the labour process. On the other hand the industries which had large concentrations of unskilled Coloured labourers were either already organised by a progressive union, as was the case in the food industry, or were captive to TUCSA unions through closed shop provisions as was the case in the textile and garment industries. (68)

This argument does, however, beg the question why other independent unions, namely the Food and Canning Workers' Union, the National Union of Motor and Rubber Workers of South Africa, and the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association were successfully organising Coloured workers during the 1970s. In

part this could be explained by the nature of the unskilled Coloured workers which the WPGWU was trying to organise. Many of them were casual labourers with a high labour turnover. Their lack of stability thus did not make them suitable for unionisation. (69)

Another reason was however the fact that the WPGWU was an African union and that African workers were unsure about the wisdom of organising Coloured workers into the union. The reason for this was explained by Lewis:

There is a problem of the relationship between African and Coloured workers which I would say is something that has broken down a little bit over the last couple of years since 1976, but still to this day African workers really believe that Coloured workers are actually unreliable. You know, that when the chips are really down, they're not going to stand with them. And there is evidence of that in the past. (70)

In addition to that the African membership imbued the union with an African culture. The most obvious aspect thereof was that Xhosa was the predominant language in the union. Coloured workers, especially while they were strongly outnumbered, would therefore feel like strangers in the union. Thus although the WPGWU was a non-racial union committed to organising all workers regardless of race, in practice the schisms between the population groups which had been exacerbated by the state proved difficult to weld together in the short run. The initial decision by the union not to organise Coloured workers therefore proved difficult to rectify subsequently and left the union with a smaller and weaker base.

A final aspect of the WPGWU's organisational strategy to consider with regards to building up a power base is the fact that it became a general, rather than industrial, union. From the outset it adopted a policy of organising all workers who approached the union regardless of the industry or enterprise

which the workers came from. Similarly the organisers approached plants on a random basis, organising workers wherever it could establish suitable contacts. Dave Lewis described the problem as follows:

One of the problems is the potential tendency towards randomness in organising. You know, when you are a general workers' union you accept any members. Accepting any members is fine, organising any members is another story altogether. And there was and still is a little bit of a tendency to do that: 'Ah, there's a big factory, we'll go and grab that', when it actually makes very little sense in terms of the general make-up of the union to in fact go for such a factory. (71)

This approach on the part of the union prevented it from building up and consolidating its strength in strategically chosen industries in Cape Town. Instead, the strength of the union advanced and receded in diverse industries over time. Soon after the Advice Bureau was founded it showed most progress in engineering, financial and security firms as well as hospitals. (72) However, over the next few years the financial and security firms and hospitals fell away so that by 1978 the union had advanced most in the engineering and construction industries. By the end of 1979 these two industries started receding and, instead, the union had rapidly gained ground in stevedoring and meat firms.

The strategy of establishing a general union thus made the WPGWU end up as a less powerful organisation than it most probably could have been if it had concentrated on organising strategic enterprises in a limited number of industries. Because workers in different industries also faced quite diverse working conditions it is also not clear that the formation of a general union created greater solidarity than a federation of industrial unions would have done. However, the WPGWU did succeed in establishing sound democratic work place organisation wherever it did take root.

## Part 5

### Synthesis and Conclusions

#### Introduction

In Part Five the empirical and theoretical findings of the thesis are drawn together. It commences with a summary of the history of the independent unions during the 1970s by synthesizing the experiences of the different union groupings presented in detail in Parts Two to Four. It thereupon analysis the union groupings' strategies for power on a comparative basis and proceeds with an examination of the democratisation process within the unions.

The final chapter contains the conclusions of the thesis. It is done by presenting the major findings of the thesis and analysing the extent to which they challenge, modify or confirm the sociological theories presented in the thesis. Finally, the political significance of the activities of the independent unions is assessed.

## Chapter 12

### Historical Synthesis and Union Strategies for Power

#### 1. Development of the Independent Trade Unions in the 1970's

##### 1.1 Origins and Formation

Although the independent trade union groups were started under circumstances unique to each group, the ones considered in the thesis all had four broad themes in common. These were, firstly, that they all started as organisations other than trade unions for fear of state repression. In this 'survival era' the organisations that emerged as forerunners of the independent unions were the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund (GFWBF) and Central Administration Services (CAS) in Durban, the Urban Training Project (UTP) and Industrial Aid Society (IAS) in Johannesburg, and the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau (WPWAB) in Cape Town.

Secondly, the initiative for the formation of the unions came primarily from intellectuals outside the ranks of the Black working class although this was done in conjunction with African trade unionists or former trade unionists: the GFWBF was founded by officials from some registered trade unions and Wages Commission students. Subsequently some SACTU supporters assisted in the formation of the unions. The WPWAB and IAS were founded mainly by Wages Commission students in conjunction with former SACTU trade unionists, and the UTP by ex-TUCSA trade unionists. The leadership of the incipient unions was initially in the hands of the intellectuals who were mainly White.

Thirdly, the incipient organisations all relied heavily on international funding. The major financial donors were European trade union centres, the International Confederation of Free

Trade Unions (ICFTU), and the International Trade Secretariats, but European religious organisations also made contributions. Although the union groupings generally strove to be as financially self-reliant as possible through worker subscriptions, they all remained heavily dependent on international funding throughout the 1970s. Even as late as 1979 FOSATU relied for 60-70% of its revenue on international trade unions, principally the ICFTU. However, in spite of the extensive reliance on the international trade union movement, the independent unions astutely avoided any control of their organisations by the funding bodies. This was facilitated by the fact that the donors made no concerted effort to control the unions.

Fourthly, the founders of the independent union movement had in common that they were committed to forging democratic trade unions. The leaders however held different conceptions of democracy which resulted in dissimilar practices in the union groupings.

There were also ideological divisions between the union groupings. TUACC (Natal), IAS and WPWAB were non-racial and progressive in orientation while the UTP was reformist and committed to African leadership of the unions. Ideological differences combined with variations between the regions also led to different forms of unions developing. WPWAB became committed to general unionism while all the other centres developed industrial unions although there was initially strong support in the IAS for a general union.

## 1.2 Initial Organisational Experiences

The initial organisational experiences of the independent

union groupings varied quite markedly from each other. This was due to the disparate conditions facing the unions in different regions and also distinctions between the founding bodies.

Durban was most markedly unlike the other industrial centres. The strike waves of 1973 and 1974 gave rise to high worker consciousness and militancy with the result that African workers poured into the newly formed unions. Consequently union membership in Durban grew rapidly. By June 1974, only eighteen months after after the Durban strikes had commenced, the GFWBF membership stood at 22 000 while signed up membership of the four unions founded by then had risen to over 10 000. These bodies had grouped themselves together in the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC). The unions were also adopting organisational strategies of signing on masses of members without consolidating their organisation at the workplaces. The unions had an early breakthrough with management when Smith & Nephew signed a recognition agreement jointly with the NUTW and the registered TWIU in June 1974 after a successful strike in November 1973.

In Cape Town and the Witwatersrand there were no equivalent strike waves and membership of the organisations progressed much more slowly. African workers' fears that joining trade unions would automatically entail state repression in the light of previous experiences, had to be overcome first.

There were also varied experiences between the two organisations that both operated in the Witwatersrand. The UTP was started about three years before the IAS and in a relatively short time it had revived two African unions, was servicing another, and had helped African workers to establish seven new unions. Thus it was servicing no less than ten African unions

by the end of 1975. These unions had grouped themselves together into an ad hoc body, the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions (CCOBTU). By contrast, the IAS had only succeeded in getting one union, MAWU, off the ground by that time.

The varied experiences of UTP and the IAS were in part due to the differences in composition between the two bodies. The UTP leadership consisted of experienced trade unionists whereas the IAS was composed of students and university academics with no trade union experiences. The UTP was also oriented towards establishing trade unions from the beginning, whereas extensive and drawn out debates took place in the IAS before agreement could be reached to start an industrial union. The IAS commenced its attempts to organise workers in Johannesburg with workers who resided in Soweto whereas the UTP was mainly organising in the East Rand amongst workers residing in townships where there was a stronger working class consciousness.

### 1.3 Organisational Strategies of the Unions

The organisational strategies adopted by the various union groupings also differed from each other. This was partly due to ideological distinctions between their leaders, but also because of the dissimilar circumstances facing them in different regions.

In Cape Town the WPWAB adopted a strategy from the start to form statutory works committees and to exert pressure on management to recognise and negotiate with the works committees. By assuring African workers that they were enabled by law to form works committees and that the law even gave them nominal protection against victimisation, the Advice Bureau sought to overcome workers' fears. The works committees also promoted democratic worker participation since the entire committee was

elected by African workers. The WPWAB did not insist on recognition for itself from management, but of the works committee whose representatives and electorate were members of the Advice Bureau. The works committees were therefore not used as an alternative to trade union recognition, but as a means of building up a general workers' union from the work place upwards by uniting all the works committees in a common worker organisation. Cape Town management's counter-offensive was to promote liaison committees as an alternative to recognising works committees under the auspices of the Advice Bureau. In this they were encouraged and supported by the Labour Department.

In Natal the TUACC unions were initially opposed to using statutory works and liaison committees. This was because of the managerial counter-offensive against the unions in which they used these committees as a pretext not to recognise the unions. However, as time proceeded and the unions failed to make headway and went on the defensive, they revised their strategy to one of using liaison or works committees when it was considered to be tactically advantageous to the unions.

The TUACC unions also changed their organisational strategy of signing on mass membership after worker militancy receded in Natal from about the second half of 1974. The unions lost their membership and they came to realise that

we were going factory by factory like a wind just blowing through them and leaving them no better off. (1)

The managerial counter-offensive also prevented the unions from making headway and so the unions switched their strategies to in-depth work place organisation. The shop stewards were given a key role with responsibilities for signing on, organising and representing workers in their departments, as well as for the collection of subscriptions.

On the Witwatersrand MAWU, which was started by the IAS in 1975, placed great emphasis on worker participation in decision-making from the start and strove to gain direct recognition of the union from management. The UTP-serviced unions used works committees and tried to turn them into 'union committees' by having union members elected onto the committees.

By 1976 the union groupings had established themselves fairly firmly. On the Witwatersrand the MAWU BEC was reasonably strong. (2) The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions were being encouraged to become financially more self-reliant and to rely less on the services and staff provided by the UTP. Signed up membership of seven of the UTP-serviced unions totalled no less than 19 338 in November 1976. (3)

In Natal the NUTW was the strongest and stablest independent union. This was in part due to the recognition agreement with Smith & Nephew and the supportive link it had with the registered TWIU in Natal. MAWU, CWIU and TGWU were not making much progress because of internal problems in the unions.

In Cape Town the WPWAB had organised works committees across a wide range of enterprises including engineering, construction, banking, hospitals and others although organisation was most solid in the manufacturing industry. (4) Attempts were also being made to transform the Advice Bureau into a thorough workers' movement by placing control of the organisation in the hands of elected factory representatives.

#### 1.4 Union Setbacks in 1976

During 1976, particularly in the second half of the year, the independent unions received severe setbacks. These were all as a result of the economic and political climate in which the unions were operating.

Firstly, the Soweto uprising of June 1976 that led to considerable socio-political upheavels and harsh state repression on the Witwatersrand and Cape Peninsula, severely disrupted the independent unions organising in those regions. During the height of the disorder operations of the unions just about came to a standstill.

Secondly, the economy slumped to its lowest growth level since the Second World War in the wake of the Soweto uprising and the preceding international recession. The independent unions were subsequently hard hit as workers were laid off during 1976 and 1977.

Thirdly, conflicts between management and two of the independent unions on the Witwatersrand in 1976 ended in defeats for the unions and effectively destroyed their organisational bases. The first conflict took place at Heinemann Electric in March 1976 over union recognition for MAWU. The police intervened by ruthlessly baton-charging Heinemann workers while the dispute was in progress. The subsequent turmoil led to the collapse of MAWU at Heinemann's which was the union's best organised plant by far. In addition the Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU) entered into a trial of strength with Armourplate over dismissals in September 1976 by organising a legal strike that lasted no less than eight weeks. But the union eventually lost the struggle and was weakened in the process.

Fourthly, in November 1976 the state imposed the most repressive measures yet taken against the new independent unions when it banned twenty two people who were closely involved with the union movement. Included amongst the people were three key UTP officials, the entire organisational leadership of MAWU in

Transvaal and Natal, other central organisers in Natal, and significant union officials and active supporters in the Western Cape. (5) The state appeared to have the intention of crushing the incipient independent union movement and making yet another attempt to replace them with its official plant-based liaison committee system. Although the bannings severely hampered the unions' operations, they nevertheless survived the state onslaught.

#### 1.5 Recovery and Recognition Struggles of Unions 1977-1979

Early in 1977 the independent unions were at their lowest ebb since they had been founded earlier in the decade. But the unions had laid the foundations for their recovery through the organisational structures and shop floor practices they had instilled in their members during the preceding four years.

In Cape Town the WPWAB was back on its feet again by April 1977. It soon thereafter successfully transformed itself by placing control of the organisation in the hands of a Controlling Committee comprising elected factory representatives. Soon thereafter it appropriately changed its name to the Western Province General Workers' Union (WPGWU). The WPGWU organisation also started penetrating into new industries. Of particular significance was the union's headway in organising workers in the stevedoring and meat industries in Cape Town during 1978 and 1979. The WPGWU scored one of its major achievements when it gained recognition as an unregistered union from the Cape Town Stevedores Association at the end of 1979.

In Natal TUACC possessed sufficient resources and resilience to weather the state's bannings fairly comfortably. It was necessary for MAWU to rebuild its organisation almost from scratch due to the weak strategies adopted by its previous

general secretary. Aside from the fact that it took the TGWU the whole of 1977 to resolve its internal schisms and conflicts, the TUACC Natal unions consolidated their strategy of concentrating on in-depth organisation in a limited number of factories from 1977 to 1979. They also advanced their strategy by focussing primarily on attaining recognition as a first stage of organisation. The companies were carefully chosen by the unions which selected subsidiaries of multinational corporations so that international pressure could be exerted on their parent companies to recognise the unions.

Although each of the TUACC unions in Natal was organising a number of factories, each one also conducted an intensive recognition campaign at one particular company. Thus MAWU focussed on gaining recognition at Glacier Bearings, CWIU at Henkel, TGWU at Forbo-Krommenie, and the NUTW on renewing the Smith & Nephew agreement.

The companies adopted a sophisticated counter-offensive that anticipated some of the recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission. They introduced multi-racial works councils as a pretext for refusing to recognise the unions. Management claimed that the works councils represented all the workers, not only the Africans, and that their councils were therefore more representative than the independent unions. To that argument management added that the companies would in any case not recognise and negotiate with unregistered trade unions. As a result of the effective managerial counter-offensive none of the TUACC Natal unions had succeeded in signing a recognition agreement other than the NUTW that renewed the agreement with Smith & Nephew.

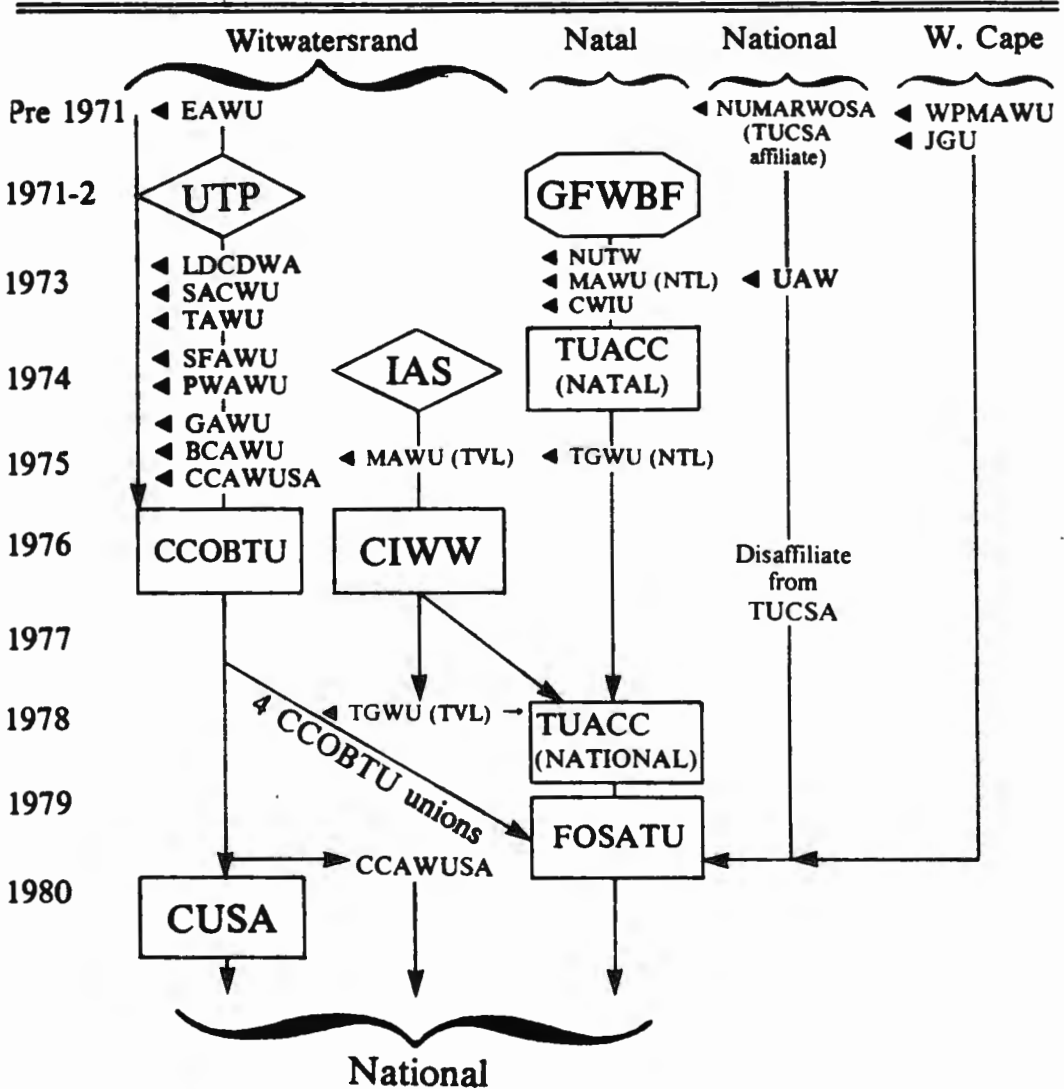
In Transvaal CCOBTU was hardest hit by the bannings and

consequently most of the unions suffered severe setbacks during the following two to three years. Although the bannings were most probably the primary reason for the setbacks, CCOBTU was also disrupted by considerable conflict within and between some of the unions. The conflict resulted from personality and power struggles between the secretaries and executive members of some of the unions as well as ideological differences of opinion whether or not the unions should enter into the newly proposed federation of independent unions.

The end result was that two of the unions split with one part of each union joining the new federation, FOSATU, while two other unions severed their relationship with CCOBTU and also affiliated to FOSATU during 1979. (See Figure 1 for a graphical overview of the formation of CCOBTU, its successor CUSA, and FOSATU.) As a result of the inner conflicts in CCOBTU the unions lost considerable ground they had gained in organising workers although other unions in CCOBTU such as SACWU and CCAWUSA carried on making steady headway. CCAWUSA in particular was successfully signing on members in the large department stores and supermarkets.

MAWU in the Transvaal had very different experiences from CCOBTU over the same period. In July 1978 the MAWU Transvaal and Natal branches united into a single national union. At about the same time TUACC was extended to operate in Transvaal and a branch of the TGWU was established on the Rand in November 1978. Then, with the formation of FOSATU in April 1979, the number of unions affiliated to the Federation with MAWU in the Transvaal region jumped dramatically from one to six.

**Figure 1**  
**Formation of FOSATU and CUSA**  
**1971 - 1980**



**Acronym Guide**

- UTP — Urban Training Project
- CCOBTU — Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions
- CUSA — Council of Unions of S.A.
- IAS — Industrial Aid Society
- CIWW — Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand
- GFWBF — General Factory Workers Benefit Fund
- TUACC — Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council
- FOSATU — Federation of South African Trade Unions
- TUCSA — Trade Union Council of S.A.

Remainder are all individual trade unions.

The unions in FOSATU also varied in their method of organisation and strategies as they had three distinct traditions of trade unionism between them, namely that of MAWU, CCOBTU, and the motor unions, NUMARWOSA and UAW.

At the start of 1977 virtually all the plants organised by MAWU had collapsed. The union almost had to be rebuilt completely by organising new factories. This was successfully done over the next three years by concentrating on intensive shop floor organisation at a limited number of factories and entering into very few strikes. Towards the end of 1979 the union's BEC had been stabilised with representatives of eleven factories attending meetings regularly and was on the verge of signing its first recognition agreement with Tensile Rubber as an unregistered union.

Although MAWU was the largest union affiliated to FOSATU in the Transvaal region by 1979, some of the other unions had also been making gains. SFAWU had signed a preliminary recognition agreement with Kellogg and EAWU was negotiating an agreement with Fagersta, a Swedish subsidiary. The UAW had built up considerable membership at Sigma and was well-organised on the shop floor, while the TGWU was laying sound organisational groundwork at a small number of diverse factories. The other two unions in FOSATU were however unorganised and in disarray.

#### 1.6 Achievements of the Independent Unions up to 1979

What were the achievements of the independent trade unions in the 1970s? They had succeeded in reviving progressive African trade unionism within a decade after the state had crushed SACTU in 1963. Another major achievement was to survive in a hostile political environment in which both the state and capital were initially opposed to their very existence.

In addition no former African trade union movement in South Africa had succeeded in establishing itself as firmly as the independent unions did. Not only did they survive, but also played a key part in forcing the state to rethink its policy on African trade unionism and, for the first time in the country's history, switch from a policy of repression to one of granting equal legal rights to African trade unions in 1979.

In Natal the TUACC unions also succeeded in turning a temporary movement into permanent organisation. The danger existed that the upsurge in African worker consciousness and militancy in 1973 and 1974 could recede as a result of the state and capital's retaliation. The TUACC unions were however successful in evolving their organisation to a shopfloor-based strategy which could advance workers' interests in the workplace sufficiently for them to identify with the unions.

## 2. Organisational Strategies for Power

The organisational strategies that the unions adopted to advance their power is considered next. The organisational strategies adopted by the unions are examined first, and then the unions' use of industrial conflict is analysed. Like the historical overview, the analysis compares and contrasts the strategies adopted by the different union groupings.

A number of organisational strategies received considerable attention from the independent unions. While there were certain broad similarities between the union groupings, there were also some significant difference between them, such as over whether to form industrial or 'general unions, whether to select certain strategic factories or to organise all-comers, whether to concentrate on gaining recognition for the union or for the

workers committee, whether to make use of statutory works committees or not and, after May 1979, whether to register or not. With the exception of registration, where the consequences of the unions' decisions only became evident after 1979, these and other related issues are considered next.

## 2.1 Work Place Organisation

All the union groupings considered in the thesis adopted a central focus on democratic workplace organisation with shop stewards playing a key role as a fundamental tenet in their strategy to acquire power. The independent unions' strategies formed a sharp contrast with the general practices of the established unions such as the registered unions in TUCSA. The officials of the latter unions tended to be office-based with workers having to come to them with their problems, shop stewards played minimal roles in the unions, officials tended to rely on industrial council inspectors and agents to resolve problems on the shopfloor, and the unions placed an emphasis on the benefits which they provided for workers. (6)

The independent unions' strategy also contrasted with the mass campaigns conducted by SACTU. Although certain unions and regions in SACTU did engaged in the painstaking task of building up their organisational strength on the shopfloor, the mass campaigns enjoyed a high priority in SACTU's policy from 1957 onwards. The mass campaigns, such as the Pound-a-Day campaign, did not attempt to build up union strength through intensive work place organisation, but rather to recruit large masses of workers into the unions on popular issues.

By contrast, in the 1970s the independent unions strove to build up their power in the work place with the core of action being in the work place and shop stewards being given the pivotal

role in the unions. It was also made clear to workers that they would have to rely on their own combined strength, rather than the officials or the law, to improve their wages and working conditions and to carve out a greater say for themselves in their working lives. Furthermore union benefits for workers were either non-existent or kept down to a minimum. This thesis has demonstrated how the independent unions repeatedly relied on the organised collective strength of workers to try and meet their demands. The organisation of workers at the workplace also usually took place democratically. Thus the independent unions' central method of building up power consisted of organising workers democratically on the shopfloor.

In practice the strategy of work place organisation was implemented in different ways by the union groupings. It was not even adopted at the outset by the TUACC unions in Natal. They commenced instead with the mass recruitment of workers outside the factory gates or in the union offices after the Durban strikes had raised worker consciousness. Organisers at first played a central role in the unions with little attention being paid to the shopfloor. It was only when the weakness of this organisational strategy dawned on the organisers during 1974 to 1975 that the unions switched to in-depth work place organisation. Shop stewards were given the key tasks of recruiting and organising workers, collecting subscriptions, canvassing worker positions on issues and taking them up with management. To do so, they had to meet regularly as committees, usually weekly, at which they also received training. Implementing such a policy was a slow and arduous task and it was not until 1977 that most of the TUACC unions were doing so on a fairly consistent basis.

By contrast the MAWU branch founded by the IAS in Johannesburg engaged in intensive work place organisation right from the outset. At Heinemann Electric, the union's best organised factory, as many as three weekly meetings were being held during the intensive struggle for recognition by the union. The tradition continued after the union lost the Heinemann dispute: shop stewards meetings were held weekly with all the factories being organised and more frequently when there was a dispute taking place. Although the other unions in the Transvaal region of FOSATU did not organise as intensively as MAWU did, they also placed an emphasis on shopfloor organisation and generally held weekly or fortnightly meetings with shop stewards.

The WPGWU also placed an emphasis on work place organisation from the start and usually held regular weekly meetings with works committees from organised plants. In addition monthly general meetings with the rank and file members from each enterprise was also held. Its adoption of the strategy to gain recognition of works committees organised under the auspices of the union led it gradually to adopt as a principle that only worker representatives and not officials could negotiate with management. This was in order to ensure the representativeness and accountability of the negotiators, but by placing such emphasis on democracy the union weakened its bargaining power. This was because union officials, unlike the worker representatives, were not dependent for their employment on management and could therefore adopt more uncompromising stance in negotiation. Union officials also usually had greater expertise than worker representatives. Their absence from the negotiating tables thus further weakened the union.

The UTP on the Witwatersrand stressed the need for workers

committees almost at the outset of their organisation in 1973. It was particularly in their Shop Steward Manual of 1976 that they spelled out the central role of shop stewards in the union very clearly. The shop steward was described as

the person responsible for the union in the work place. The shop steward is the link between the union members and the union office and the link between the union members and management. He or she is the key person to build union strength and solidarity. (7)

However, in practice the Consultative Committee unions did not place as much emphasis on shopfloor organisation as the other union groupings did. Although the unions did generally have union committees, which were statutory works committees consisting of union members, and many of the committees were playing an active role, there was not as much emphasis placed on strong shopfloor organisation as was the case with the other union groupings. Some of the unions were, for instance, not holding committee meetings, others had not held elections for new committees for many years, while none of the unions organised regular, weekly meetings with all their organised factories, as tended to be the case with the other union groupings.

In practice the different union groupings thus attained different levels of success in building up their strength through shopfloor organisation. Broadly speaking, the FOSATU unions in Natal and Transvaal and the WPGWU were more successful at building up their strength on the shopfloor than the Consultative Committee unions had been. This appeared to be primarily due to a firmer commitment on the part of the FOSATU unions and the WPGWU to strong democratic shopfloor organisation and a greater awareness of the intensity of organisation it required to put into practice. Indicative of this was the fact that their union offices tended to be hives of activity on weekdays after working

hours with shop steward and other meetings being conducted, whereas the Consultative Committee unions tended to close for the day at that time.

Other factors also accounted for differences in the shopfloor strength between the union groupings. These were the union structures and practices as well as the process through which they tried to gain union recognition. Their influences are considered below.

## 2.2 Union Structure

Two aspects of union structure were relevant to the independent unions' ability to accumulate power. The first was the internal organisational structure of the unions and the second was the decision of the unions whether to be industrial or general unions.

The internal organisational structure which facilitated the emphasis which the unions could place on shopfloor organisation was the way in which the executive committees of the unions were composed and elected. The three union groupings had different organisational arrangements. The Consultative Committee unions elected their Executive Committees at Annual General Meetings (AGMs) of the unions while in the FOSATU unions the Branch Executive Committees (BECs) consisted of shop stewards elected by the shop steward committees of the organised plants. The Controlling Committee (CC) of the WPGWU was composed of representatives elected at general meetings of the organised factories in the union. Initially the CC members did not have to be factory committee members, but from 1979 onwards it became a requirement. The distinctions between these constitutional arrangements reflected important underlying differences between the union groupings.

In the case of FOSATU and the WPGWU the composition and election procedure was deliberately designed to make the BECs and the CC members accountable to the shopfloor in each of the organised factories. Having been elected from the shopfloor, either directly or indirectly through shop stewards, the BEC and CC members were known by the shopfloor members and known to be on the executive committee. In this way work place issues could more easily be drawn to the attention of the union's supreme body while, at the same time, the executive committee members could be kept accountable by members at each of the work places. Members or shop stewards could more easily demand to know what the union was doing about shopfloor issues specific to their factory.

In the Consultative Committee unions, on the other hand, the election of Executive Committees at AGMs meant that shopfloors were not directly canvassed about the issues, Executive members were accordingly considered to be accountable to the union as a whole, not to specific workplaces. In addition it was quite possible for some factories to dominate the Executive Committee while others were not represented on it at all. Thus whereas in the FOSATU unions and the WPGWU there was the expectation and practice that the executive committees were directly accountable to the rank and file in each of the workplaces there tended to be the expectation and practice in the Consultative Committee that the executive committees were responsible, along with the union secretaries, for running the affairs of the union between the one AGM and the next.

The second aspect of union structure which influenced the organisational strength of the unions was whether they opted to be industrial or general unions. While the UTP and TUACC were clear from the outset that they wished to develop industrial

unions, debates took place within the Advice Bureau and IAS on whether to form industrial unions or other forms of worker organisation. In the IAS the alternative to industrial unionism was a general union whereas in the Advice Bureau the debate was wider-ranging and at one stage consisted of an attempt to transform itself into a Workers' Council. However, in the end the IAS started an industrial union, MAWU, in the Transvaal, and the Advice Bureau transformed itself into a general union.

On the whole the decision of the union groupings to form industrial unions assisted them more in building up their power than did the formation of a general union by the Advice Bureau. Although all the industrial unions experienced periods of advance and decline, the Western Province General Workers' Union faced additional organisational problems. By organising as widely as it did, it was unable during the 1970s to consolidate its power base in all but one of the industries. From year to year it found its power base shifting as, for various reasons, its strength in one industry declined while it was advancing in other industries. Thus after having shown strength in engineering, construction, financial and security firms as well as hospitals over the years, it ended up in 1979 consolidating its power base in stevedoring and the meat industries. However, after a devastating strike in the meat industry the following year, it completely lost its organisational foothold in the meat industry as well.

An additional reason why the formation of a general union was not as advantageous for building up power emerged in 1978 when a debate ensued in the Transvaal branch of TUACC over whether the next union it would found was to be a general or industrial union. On this occasion the will of worker representatives that all workers should be organised prevailed

and resulted in the formation of a general union, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU). It proceeded to organise workers in diverse industries, but encountered demarcation problems with other independent industrial unions which argued that it was encroaching on their terrain, as well as managerial resistance in granting it recognition because it was not considered to be the 'appropriate' industrial union by the companies.

Furthermore, as a general union, the WPGWU felt it could not turn workers away regardless of which enterprise they came from. The result was that the union did not engage in the strategic selection of companies that could have assisted in building up its power base. This aspect of union strategies is considered below.

### 2.3 Strategic Selection of Companies to Organise

There were two approaches amongst the union groupings with regards to the number of factories the unions selected to organise and the intensity with which they actually organised them. The WPGWU and Consultative Committee unions tended to organise all workers which came to the union and selected enterprises regardless of their strategic significance. Some of the Consultative Committee unions recruited workers very widely. EAWU was thus organising 40 to 50 factories in 1979 whereas the Laundry, Dry Cleaning and Dyeing Workers Association was organising about 60 companies with only one organiser. The FOSATU unions in Natal, on the other hand, concentrated on very few strategically selected companies, especially after 1977. In some cases the unions concentrated most of their resources on only one or two factories in order to make concerted effort to

win recognition from the companies. In Transvaal MAWU also limited the number of factories it was organising after 1977, but not nearly as drastically as the FOSATU unions did in Natal.

As a result of its policy the WPGWU ended up organising workers at enterprises where its ability to build up a power base was limited. Most noticeably security services and hospitals fell under this category, as did building sites in the construction industry. The building sites were very difficult to organise on a sustained basis because of their temporary nature and workers were moved around as a result and because many of the employees were migrant workers with a relatively high turnover. An immense amount of effort and resources were required simply to maintain a fairly low density of organisation in the construction industry. Similarly the indiscriminate signing on of members from tens of factories on the part of EAWU forestalled the possibility of engaging on in-depth work place organisation by the union.

While it was understandable that unions did not want to turn workers who wanted to be organised away, TUACC in Natal found a solution to this problem which did not interfere with the unions' policy of trying to build up their power base. It established the TUACC Workers' Project which workers could join by paying a small subscription fee and receiving only limited services from it in return, usually in the form of individual legal services. The Workers' Project also aided the unions which could eventually draw in new factories from it once sufficient membership had been built up or an active core had revealed itself at a factory. This strategy was adopted by TUACC in Transvaal as well.

The formation of the Workers' Project allowed FOSATU unions in Natal to concentrate on a small number of strategically chosen plants. These were selected on the basis of their size and

international linkage which also enabled the unions to exert international pressure on the companies.

In the long run the policy of selecting enterprises for their strategic value paid off in that the unions that did so were using their resources more effectively in building a power base. They were eventually granted recognition at a larger number of factories and grew more rapidly in size and strength.

#### 2.4 Policy towards Statutory Works and Liaison Committees

From their inception the Advice Bureau and UTP adopted a strategy of establishing statutory works committees in factories where workers were being organised. The approach adopted by both was to have union members elected onto the works committees. Both organisations were also opposed to co-operating with liaison committees because they were not wholly elected by workers and because they tended to be part of management's counter-offensive against the unionisation of African workers.

In Natal on the other hand, the TUACC unions were initially strongly opposed to any form of statutory committee, regardless of whether they were liaison or works committees. The unions adopted this policy because management in Natal was very actively promoting liaison committees as a counter-measure against the unionisation of their African employees.

The initial strategy adopted by the Advice Bureau and UTP was more appropriate at the time for building a power base in that statutory works committees were democratic in form and obliged management to recognise and negotiate with elected worker representatives in the workplace. The law also nominally gave workers protection against victimisation although in practice this protection counted for very little. The Advice Bureau and

Consultative Committee unions achieved considerable success with the strategy as they established a considerable number of works committees that were recognised by, and dealt directly with management. As the Advice Bureau grew stronger (and became the WPGWU) and its workers more confident, it gradually started abandoning the policy of forming statutory works committees and established factory-based workers committees instead. This demonstrated progress on the part of the union as it relied exclusively on its organisational strength to gain recognition of the workers committees.

The Natal FOSATU unions mistakenly made a principle out of a strategy by opposing all forms of statutory committees. As time passed and the managerial counter-offensive of founding liaison committees in order to foil the unions' efforts at gaining recognition gained considerable ground, the unions switched their strategies from outright opposition to statutory committees to a strategic evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of using such a committee. However the FOSATU unions still failed to distinguish sharply between works committees which were not only democratic in form, but enabled the unions to control them, and liaison committees which lent themselves more to control and manipulation by management. They therefore tried to make use of both liaison and works committees with their attempts to make use of liaison committees all without exception ending up in failure.

Alternatively the FOSATU unions in Natal tried to boycott liaison committees or isolate them by taking them over first and then refusing to use them. This was only successful at Glacier Bearing. Another strand in these unions' strategy was to form works committees as a bridgehead in the workplace for trying to gain union recognition. Although the unions did not gain

recognition, the works committees did generally help them to advance their organisation at the plants as was the case at Revertex and Multi-Metals.

The TUACC unions in Natal thus lost time and ground with their initial strategy towards statutory committees thereby weakening themselves for the first three or so years. By contrast, the approach adopted by the UTP and the WPGWU enabled them to adopt a strategy which strengthened them initially. In particular the strategy helped the WPGWU to build up sufficient strength and confidence to start abandoning its reliance on statutory works committees and form workers committees instead.

## 2.5 Union Recognition

The union groupings adopted different strategies with regards to gaining recognition from management. The WPGWU concentrated on gaining recognition of its factory-based workers committees elected under the auspices of the union instead of recognition of the union. This was a continuation of the earlier policy of gaining recognition of the statutory works committees. The reason for this strategy was that it was felt that this strategy would ensure greater democracy in the union by preventing domination of the negotiations by organisers.

The policy adopted by the FOSATU unions was to insist on recognition of the union as a whole. This involved negotiating over working conditions with both the shop stewards committees and union officials. The Consultative Committee had a similar policy to FOSATU on recognition.

While both strategies held advantages for promoting trade union strength, the one adopted by the FOSATU and Consultative Committee unions was more effective because it could ensure both

worker representative participation and maximum union strength at the negotiation table. This was because both shop stewards with their detailed knowledge of working conditions and union officials with greater expertise could be present at negotiations. The independence of the union officials from management could also ensure that the union could negotiate free from fear of dismissal, a possibility that always faced shop stewards. The approach of the WPGWU considerably increased the opportunity for worker participation, but placed more emphasis on union democracy than on strengthening union power vis-a-vis management. In practice it also worked out that union officials did, in any case, attend and participate in meetings between management and workers committees as happened with the Cape Town Stevedores Association.

From these considerations it thus emerges that trade union democracy and power are simultaneously complementary and contradictory to each other. The independent unions were able to build up their power by practising trade union democracy through worker participation on the shopfloor, but an excessive concentration on trade union democracy as a principled goal could reduce the potential power of a union.

It was however not only the unions' policy towards recognition, but also the process through which they endeavoured to gain such recognition that affected their organisational strength. In this regard there was a wide divergence between the strategies of the FOSATU unions on the one hand and the Consultative Committee unions on the other hand. The recognition campaigns conducted by the FOSATU unions in Natal after 1977 were very intensive and involved the active participation and, at times, struggles of the rank and file members of the union. The workers were as, if not more,

intensively involved than the organisers in the struggle for recognition at the plants. New strategies also kept being devised by the union to try and gain recognition.

By contrast the recognition campaign conducted by the Consultative Committee unions from 1975 to 1976 did not involve intensive struggles. In general, once the demand for recognition had been made, either by the works committee or through a letter written by the union on behalf of the members, and a refusal had been received from the company the matter was dropped by the union. There were no concerted attempts made to put pressure on management through the organised strength of workers on the shopfloor to change their mind and recognise the union instead.

The process of gaining recognition was significant because it could be taken as indicative of how a union would conduct its affairs once it had gained recognition. Inevitably clashes of interests would arise between management and workers once a recognition agreement had been signed between the parties. The unions would be faced with options whether to build up the workers' collective strength in support of their demands or whether to settle for the best that could be gained under the circumstances. Hence it is reasonable to conclude that the FOSATU unions were more actively engaged than the Consultative Committee unions in building up their power base in the workplace as far as gaining recognition was concerned.

Since this study of the independent unions only goes up to the end of 1979 the effect of registering on the power of the unions could not be assessed as they were still in the process of registering when the field work for this thesis was being conducted.

In conclusion it can be said that the independent unions were more effective in their organisational strategies when they built up their power base democratically by organising the collective strength of workers on the shopfloor in support of their demands; when the structures and practices of the union facilitated more direct shopfloor representation on the union executive committees; when they concentrated their organisational efforts on specific industries rather than organising generally across industries; when they strategically selected companies to organise rather than responding to all workers who came to them; by gaining company recognition of the union in such a way that management recognised and negotiated with both shop stewards and union officials; and by utilising statutory plant-based committees in such a way that they did not compromise the independent control and democratic principles of the unions.

### 3. The Independent Unions' Strategic Use of Conflict

#### 3.1 Action that gave Initial Impetus to Union Organisation

Industrial conflict can have diverse effects on the power which trade unions are able to yield. An analysis of the industrial conflicts which the independent unions entered into suggest that their impact on the unions can be divided into three categories. Some disputes gave an impetus to the growth of the independent unions while they were still very new in the early 1970s. In Natal they played an even more important role by impelling the formation of independent unions. In other cases the strikes strengthened the unions' organisation while in a fairly large number of cases they were detrimental to the unions. The strikes that gave an initial impetus to trade union organisation are considered first.

In Natal the 1973 strike wave that started in Durban and spread to Pietermaritzburg gave an immense momentum to the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund that was already in existence at the time of the strikes. The strikes raised African worker militancy and consciousness which they channelled into building their own worker organisations. The following year, in January 1974, the renewed strike wave, concentrated in the textile industry, hit Durban once again. It had the effect of renewing the momentum of workers to join the unions.

One of the most significant strikes during that time was the one at Smith & Nephew in Pinetown in November 1973. The strike was to back a demand for higher wages and was supported by both Indian and African workers. The significance of the strike lay in the fact that the company agreed to recognise the unregistered and recently founded National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) along with the registered Textile Workers Industrial Union. As a result the first agreement recognising an unregistered independent union was signed in July 1974 between Smith & Nephew and NUTW.

On the Witwatersrand a strike and some industrial disputes also lent impetus to the formation and revival of unions by the Urban Training Project (UTP). The strike in June 1972 by 300 African bus drivers employed by PUTCO in Johannesburg in demand of higher wages led directly to the formation of the Transport and Allied Workers (TAWU).

Two or three disputes involving the UTP also boosted trade union membership and support. At Raleigh Cycles in Springs African workers wanted to establish a works committee, but in July 1973 management fired four female workers who had distributed UTP calendars that focussed on workers committees.

A Supreme Court interdict was issued against the company to refrain from victimising workers and the company settled out of court agreeing to reinstate the fired workers with back pay and to the establishment of a works committee. A similar incident took place at Van Leer, also an engineering company on the East Rand, soon afterwards: a worker was victimised while the workers were trying to establish a works committee. The matter was also taken to the Supreme Court, and, again, management settled out of court. As a result of these victories membership of the Engineering and Allied Workers' Union (EAWU) which the UTP was assisting, rose considerably. In like vein the strike at Pilkington Brothers in November 1974 which led to the victimisation of strike leaders was taken to the Supreme Court and won by the dismissed workers. The outcome of the strike helped to build up workers' confidence and the formation of the Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU) in April 1975.

In the Cape Peninsula the Advice Bureau initially made rapid headway in establishing works committees at a number of plants, but came up against intractable management at Nautilus Marine that refused to allow the formation of a works committee. A protracted legal struggle ensued, but the Advice Bureau's lawyer did not make much headway. The workers however quickly resolved the matter in September 1974 by going on strike when management victimised a fellow-worker: within a few hours the dismissed worker was reinstated and management had agreed to the formation of works committee. This action on the part of workers not only strengthened organisation at Nautilus Marine, but also provided other workers with a vivid demonstration of the power of collective worker action and organisation.

The disputes narrated above served to give the unions an initial impetus by helping them to recruit and organise workers.

Once they were more established the unions entered into disputes that either served to strengthen their organisation or weaken them. Before analysing what the crucial factors were that determined the outcome of the disputes, all the case studies of the major disputes of the unions which were considered in the thesis are briefly summarised below. This is done in order to collect the information together and for subsequent ease of reference.

### 3.2 Disputes that Advanced the Unions' Strength

#### Cape Town Stevedores

The Cape Town stevedores staged a highly disciplined one day work stoppage in December 1979 in demand of recognition of their workers committee elected under the auspices of the unregistered Western Province General Workers' Union (WPGWU). Although the Cape Town Stevedores Association had previously indicated that it would not recognise an unregistered union, the work stoppage induced it to change its policy and it decided to recognise the workers committee. The strike resulted in one of the most significant victories for the WPGWU, not only because its committee gained recognition, but also because it immensely strengthened the union's argument against registration at a time that the issue was being hotly debated.

#### Natal

##### Carpet Manufacturing Company (CMC), Jacobs, Durban

In September 1975 African workers went on strike at CMC because management had fired a shop steward of the NUTW for hitting a White foreman in self-defence. Workers remained at their machines, but refused to commence working until management

had reinstated the foreman. This happened at four consecutive shifts until management addressed a large gathering of workers outside the plant. Through the skillful intervention of an organiser who had mingled with the workers, the strike was turned into a victory for the workers. The organiser, speaking from the midst of the crowd, obtained a concession from management to give a written undertaking that the shop steward would be reinstated after two weeks and would receive pay during the suspension. The organiser also persuaded the workers to accept the offer and the NUTW emerged with increased strength and credibility from the dispute.

#### Forbo-Krommenie, Durban

The dispute at Forbo-Krommenie in October 1978 arose out of a concerted recognition campaign the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) was conducting at the company. The company tenaciously clung to its liaison committee while the union resolutely pursued recognition through its strong shop steward committee in the plant. The dispute came to a head when management fired a worker for alleged insubordination as well as thirteen other workers who left their workplace to question management's reason for doing so. Although twelve of the workers were subsequently taken back on conditions laid down by management, the state proceeded to prosecute the workers for striking in a dispute that was much more akin to a lock-out. The magistrate however decided that the workers had not gone on strike. As a result the outcome of the dispute was that the union's shop steward committee was still intact and able to continue pressurising management to recognise the union.

However, many of the disputes the independent unions entered into had detrimental effects on their organisation and strength. Cases where this happened are briefly described before the

factors that accounted for the victory or defeat of a conflict are presented.

### 3.3 Disputes that were Detrimental to the Unions

#### Witwatersrand

##### Heinemann Electric, Germiston

The dispute at Heinemann - it is not clear whether it constituted a strike or a lockout - took place in March 1976 over MAWU's campaign to have the union recognised. Management resolutely refused to do so and tried to promote a liaison committee in its stead. The African workers boycotted it. The dispute gradually escalated until police presence almost became a regular feature at the plant. The crisis was reached when management fired twenty workers including three shop stewards. The following morning all the workers were dismissed when they remained outside the gates requesting to see the managing director over the previous day's dismissals. They again returned to work the following Monday to find the gates locked. After a deadlock was reached the police, armed with batons and pickhandles, gave them instructions to disperse within 30 minutes, but baton-charged the workers before the full time had elapsed. The ensuing chaos coupled with the arrest and trial of trade unions officials destroyed the union's organisation at Heinemann, the best organised factory of MAWU on the Rand, and severely hampered the organisation of other plants as well. The dispute was thus a complete defeat for the union and drastically set back its organisation on the Rand.

##### Armourplate, Springs

The strike at Armourplate by members of the Glass and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU) that commenced in September 1976 was unique

in a number of ways: it was the first ever legal strike by African workers in the country; the union also organised a picket outside the company at the outset of the strike, but the state squashed it with great alacrity; the strike was also one of the first trials of strength organised by an independent union in the 1970s.

The strike was caused when Armourplate dismissed three workers without consulting the works committee which was a union committee as well. The union insisted that this was a violation of a procedural undertaking on the part of management and called a legal strike when management refused to reinstate the workers. Before and during the strike police intervened on the side of management, especially when workers started picketing the plant. Police turned up within a short time and prosecuted workers under the Riotous Assemblies Act on the same day.

The union organised strong support for the striking workers including financial assistance, but after eight weeks the workers were no longer able to hold out against the company. They ended the strike formally by getting their pass books signed off at Armourplate. Although management had by then exercised its prerogative to dismiss the striking workers and employ alternative workers, it wanted to re-employ some of the striking workers. The strikers however refused to be re-employed on a selective basis and were thus all dismissed. The strike thus ended in a serious defeat for the union.

#### Nel's Dairy, Johannesburg

The Sweet Food and Allied Workers' Union (SFAWU) section of which Sikhakhane was the secretary fought a long and extensive dispute against management that stubbornly refused to have any dealings with an African union.

The dispute centred around the union and African workers'

attempt to have a works committee established at Nel's Dairy, but the management resolutely opposed this move. Finally the dispute boiled over into a strike in March 1979 after four workers had been dismissed the previous week. Management thereupon took an even tougher stand against the union and deliberately started firing union activists even though the union filed two court interdicts to restrain management from victimising workers. Charges were laid against the company and in a settlement out of court Nel's Dairy agreed to pay damages of R25 000. Although the financial outcome was a victory for the union and workers concerned, the union lost ground organisationally in that its original leadership at the company had been removed.

#### Toyota, Johannesburg

A spontaneous strike in October 1979 by members of MAWU working at Toyota resulted in a severe setback for the union. The strike took place when workers refused to accept the new disciplinary procedure that management had unilaterally introduced. Underlying the workers' resistance to the procedure was management's refusal to recognise their union and negotiate a disciplinary procedure with the union. Management fired all 101 striking workers, but selectively re-employed 76 of them. Amongst the 25 who were not re-employed 12 were shop stewards. The outcome of the strike was a blow to MAWU which not only lost one of its best organised companies on the Rand, but also one of its strongest shop steward committees.

## Cape Town

### Mastertreads

At a Mastertreads plant in Cape Town African workers who were members of the Advice Bureau engaged in a go-slow in 1975 when management deliberately stalled wage negotiations with the works committee at the plant. On the same day that the go-slow commenced management indicated that they would take up wage negotiations again with the committee. The go-slow however turned out to be a temporary victory as the company subsequently replaced African with Coloured workers and the works committee dwindled away. Organisation at Mastertreads thereupon came to an end.

### Nautilus Marine

A few weeks after the successful work stoppage by workers in Nautilus workers again came out on strike in October 1974 in demand of higher wages and against the victimisation of ten fellow workers. However, on this occasion the strike had a different outcome. Relationships between management and the workers had soured immensely to the point that no working relationship existed. Management had beforehand indicated its intention to break the Advice Bureau and works committee's hold and seized on the strike to dismiss and selectively re-employ workers. The result was that organisation at Nautilus Marine came to an end and the Advice Bureau's strongest plant organisation was broken. The event also acted as a disincentive to organisation in that the militant leaders at Nautilus were harassed by the security police who tried to prevent them from finding employment elsewhere on the Peninsula.

### Duen's Bakery

At Duen's Bakery African workers had attempted to establish a works committee for a considerable period. In August 1975

they finally went on strike in order to force management's hand to convene a meeting at which a works committee could be elected. The strike was planned at the early morning change of shift so that all the workers would be present and, when management turned up, they could call for a meeting right there to elect a committee. Management however refused to comply and called in the police. This strategy was repeated two mornings in succession, but on the second morning police selectively arrested striking workers, nineteen of whom were charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act. Although they were found innocent in that the state failed to prove that the strike was illegal, organisation at Duen's Bakery came to an end.

### Natal

Disputes that severely weakened the independent unions in Natal took place at Leyland, Pinetex, Defy, Conac Engineering, Natal Cotton and Woollen Mills, and Rainbow Chickens.

#### Leyland Motor Corporation, Mobeni, Durban

The strike at Leyland occurred in March 1974, a time when African workers in Natal were still in a militant mood and the unions were still generally increasing in size. The Leyland strike probably constituted the first serious setback for a TUACC union, in this case MAWU. The strike was over union recognition: management formed a liaison committee and workers downed tools when management refused to call a referendum to determine the workers' aspirations. In spite of remaining on the premises, 104 of the 177 striking workers were fired.

Management at Leyland then appeared to change their strategy by indicating they would reinstate the fired workers and negotiate with MAWU. Instead, however, management refrained

from re-employing 65 of the strikers including the strongest and most influential trade unionists and so managed to strangle the union's organisation at Leyland. Thus, under the pretence of recognising the union, management engaged in a strategy to crush the union at Leyland. Because of this and state interference at another Leyland plant, the union ceased organising at Leyland.

#### Pinetex, Pinetown

The NUTW attempted to organise a legal strike at Pinetex, a Frame mill, in April 1974, over victimisation of six contract workers. However, on the morning the strike was scheduled to happen the police arrested the organiser, who had been using rather strong-arm tactics, for inciting the workers to strike. He was found guilty on the grounds that the attempted strike was declared illegal because the union had made a small technical error by informing the Labour Officer in the wrong district of the dispute.

#### Defy, Jacobs, Durban

African and Indian workers at Defy came out on strike over a bonus dispute after the company had introduced new technology that increased workers productivity. The company was intent on not increasing its wage bill and paid workers only approximately half of the new bonus they had expected. Management ended up firing 19 of the 45 striking African workers and MAWU's organisation at the plant came to an end.

#### Conac Engineering, Pietermaritzburg

The dispute between Conac and MAWU is noteworthy for the range of forces that was mustered against the union. No less than three state departments, Labour, Police, and Bantu Administration, as well as the Industrial Council, took up stances against MAWU during the dispute in October 1975. The dispute was over workers' refusal to work overtime which the

company not only regularly demanded from them, but made them work much more than the statutory maximum of ten hours per week that the Industrial Council Agreement stipulated. The company fired seven African workers who refused to work overtime and subsequently locked-out others who indicated that they were unwilling to do overtime. During the ensuing struggle in which the union tried to get the workers reinstated, it was constantly harangued by the security police and treated in a hostile and unco-operative manner by officials from the Departments of Labour and Bantu Administration. The Industrial Council official also refused to divulge whether the company had been granted exemption to allow African workers to do more than the statutory ten hours per week. Under these circumstances union organisation at the plant lapsed.

#### **Natal Cotton and Woollen Mills (NCWM), Jacobs, Durban**

During 1975 the workers at NCWM had staged a series of successful short work stoppages in support of their demands. In a counter-move management, which was keen to promote a liaison committee at the plant, appointed a new personnel manager who was virulently opposed to the NUTW. He immediately proceeded to boost the liaison committee and tried to crush the union with such brutal force that workers of their own accord decided to strike in demand of the dismissal of the new personnel manager. The strike commenced on 27 October 1975 and developed into a trial of strength as it carried on for a fortnight. The NUTW strongly supported the strike and organised surreptitious picketing around the plant. It also made loans available to the striking workers to help tide them through. The strike succeeded in getting management to agree to dismiss the personnel manager, but only after a discreet period had elapsed once the strike had

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ended. The strike however turned into a severe setback for the union when it collapsed as many strikers unexpectedly returned to work. By so doing the 150 most committed strikers who were still out on strike were left exposed to management. Subsequently only 15 of the 150 were reinstated by the company and union organisation at NCWM came to an end.

#### Rainbow Chickens, Hammarsdale

At Rainbow Chickens the workers and an organiser from the TUACC Workers Project (TWP) planned to hold a series of work stoppages over the victimisation of a shop steward. They intended to cease working but remain on the company's premises and return to work each time management threatened them with dismissal if they did not start working. The plan however backfired as the workers refused to start working when management issued them with an ultimatum that they would be fired otherwise. The same thing happened to the afternoon shift when they refused to start working after management had given them a final warning to do so. Management selectively re-employed the fired workers with 150 to 200 of the workers not being taken back again. The strike was a setback for organisation at the plant even though the TWP subsequently recruited new members quite rapidly at the plant again.

### 3.4 Analysis of Industrial Conflict by Independent Unions

An important question to consider is why some conflicts advanced and strengthened trade union organisation while others weakened the unions. The question is related to, but not the same as, asking which disputes ended in victories for the unions and which ended in defeats. The underlying factors that determined why some industrial disputes advanced and others retarded the unions are therefore teased out next. It is based

on the dispute case studies that were briefly summarised above.

On the rare occasion where African workers were indispensable to operations and could not be easily and quickly replaced management was likely to accede to their demand as was the case with the PUTCO bus drivers who won their demands for a wage increase and retained their employment.

Go-slows and limited work stoppages where workers remained in possession of their machines tended to have successful outcomes for the unions as were the cases at Mastertreads and NCWM. Furthermore stoppages in which workers returned to work once management had finally threatened them with dismissal if they did not do so had favourable outcomes. By contrast, work stoppages where workers remained defiant once management had issued a final ultimatum tended to be lost as happened at Toyota and Rainbow Chickens.

Strikes or stoppages where workers displayed a clear discipline with the union being able to demonstrate its ability to call workers out on strike and to bring them back in to work had more chance of succeeding. This was clearly demonstrated by the stevedores' one day strike in Cape Town. On the other hand workers at Rainbow Chickens were not as well disciplined and did not adhere to their pre-arranged plan. The result was that the work stoppage failed and organisation in the plant was weakened.

Disputes in which the police remained uninvolved were more likely to succeed than ones with police intervention of one kind or another. Heinemann was an example of how police intervention not only destroyed organisation in that plant, but disorganised all of MAWU's organisation on the Wiatersrand. At Armourplate and Rainbow Chickens organisation was also disrupted and disorganised by police interventions.

Where the workers and union made a realistic assessment of management's response to industrial action they were more likely to be successful than where they miscalculated managerial responses. In the case of the stevedores' strike, the union had made a realistic assessment of management's reaction. At the first Nautilus strike the workers correctly assumed management would yield to their demand, but in the second strike they had seriously underestimated management's hostility and determination to destroy their organisation.

Managerial attitudes towards trade unionism itself was also a key factor in determining the outcome of a dispute. When unions were faced with management who had a liberal pluralist orientation to worker organisation they were more likely to succeed than when they faced management who were opposed to independent trade unionism from a unitarist perspective. Thus at Heinemann Electric, Toyota and Leyland, for instance, management were hostile to trade unionism with the result that the strikes were exploited by management to break union organisation at their plants. At NCWM managerial attitude and policy towards the NUTW hardened so much over time that union organisation temporarily had to cease at the company.

Another factor that played a role in the outcome of a strike was the spontaneity of the action. Spontaneous actions taken by workers in the heat of the moment were more likely to have detrimental outcomes than strikes over which they had deliberated beforehand. The Toyota strike demonstrated the dangerous consequences of spontaneous action on the part of workers whereas the well planned and executed stevedores strike proved highly successful.

Finally, in disputes where workers' legal rights were clearly being violated recourse to the Supreme Court turned out

to be successful as in the Raleigh, Van Leer and Pilkington cases.

To pull together the findings on disputes, the above analysis showed that the unions tended to advance their struggles in disputes where workers were irreplaceable in the short run, where they returned to work once management had issued a final ultimatum that they would be fired otherwise, where the police did not intervene in the dispute, where the action was planned and carried out by a well disciplined work force, and when managerial reaction had been assessed realistically. By contrast, strikes and other disputes tended to end in defeats when workers were easily replaceable, when they carried on striking after management had issued their last ultimatum, where the police did intervene in the dispute, where action was spontaneous and the work force was undisciplined, and when management's reaction had been miscalculated.

The analysis thus points to the immense significance of the absence of the right to strike in South Africa. The South African judicial system made it legal under all circumstances for employers to dismiss striking employees under common law for breaking their contracts regardless of whether the strike was legal or not. Employers thus had the legal right at all times to dismiss workers who went on strike regardless of the circumstances. Under such conditions the common factor that emerged as the determinant of the outcome of a dispute was whether the workers managed to retain their employment or not.

In disputes where workers and their shopfloor leaders were not dismissed as a result of their industrial action, the unions tended to advance and strengthen their organisation at the workplace. The unions then retained their organisational base

intact and had members with increased experience and awareness. On the other hand, when large numbers of workers or their shopfloor leaders were dismissed, the unions were weakened. Given the small size and limited resources of the unions it was generally impossible for them to reorganise such plants. The key determinant of the outcome of an industrial dispute at that stage of the independent unions' development was thus whether the unions retained their membership at the plants or whether they lost a large mass of workers or their key shopfloor leaders.

## Chapter 13

### Democratisation of the Independent Unions

#### 1. The Creation of Democratic Structures

The independent unions considered in the thesis shared certain common themes in their efforts to democratise themselves and their co-ordinating bodies. At the same time there were also some sharp contrasts between the union groupings. This synthesis highlights what the union groupings had in common and where they diverged from each other.

The first aspect which the independent unions had in common was that they all owed their existence to oligarchic organisations other than trade unions. The Western Province General Workers' Union (WPGWU) commenced as the WPWAB, FOSATU in Natal had its origins in the Central Administration Services (CAS) and the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund (GFWBF), while in Transvaal it had its roots in the Industrial Aid Society (IAS). The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions in turn owed their existence mainly to the UTP. Therefore the first challenge that faced all the organisations in their quest for democracy was to create unions and coordinating bodies with structures that were in fact democratic. The task was by no means an easy one and took many years to achieve.

The process through which the different organisations created democratic structures in all the union groupings are briefly examined below.

#### Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau

The WPWAB was founded in March 1973 and although the constitution made allowance for the election of an Executive

Committee elected annually at the AGM, real control of the organisation was in the hands of a small group of intellectuals who were almost all Whites drawn from the University of Cape Town and the legal profession. The small group called itself the Workers Advisory Project (WAP). In order to provide the Advice Bureau with respectability in the eyes of donors and a protective umbrella against the state, a Board of Trustees was also set up. Its membership was determined by WAP and composed mainly of WAP members as well as registered trade unionists who were considered to be sympathetic. Constitutionally, the Board of Trustees controlled appointments, finances and decisions taken by the Executive Committee.

As the Advice Bureau placed an emphasis on workplace organisation the number of organised works committees increased rapidly and after almost two years of existence the intellectuals in WAP felt that the time had come to transform the Advice Bureau into a democratic organisation. The need for the transformation arose out of the organisational developments in the Advice Bureau since the Executive Committee, which was elected at an AGM and chaired by a rather conservative township leader, was unrepresentative of the works committees and out of touch with issues at most factories.

After extensive discussions it was decided that a Workers' Council should be established. It was envisaged that the Workers' Council would consist of factory committees elected by the workers at each factory and take up issues inside and beyond the workplace. Control of the whole organisation as well as intellectuals in the movement was to be vested in the hands of the Workers' Council and the Executive Committee was to be abolished.

The achievement of this objective proved to be considerably more difficult than was expected by the intellectuals. The first Works Council which was established in April 1975 was stillborn. The reason for this was most probably because the workers in the Advice Bureau lacked the expertise and organisational experience to take command of the Council, but failure could also have been due to the fact that the workers did not consider it an appropriate time for founding an organisation that could become politically involved. It was only on the third attempt after two more years of endeavour that success was achieved. By that stage it was decided to set up a Controlling Committee comprising two representatives elected by a general meeting of each organised factory in the Advice Bureau.

The Controlling Committee finally came into existence and started functioning in the first half of 1977. The functions of the Controlling Committee were to control the organisation. All policy decisions were to be taken by the Committee and organisers as well as the White intellectuals in the movement were to be appointed by the Committee and be accountable to it. It thus took the Advice Bureau four years from the time of its foundation to transform its own structure into that of a democratic worker organisation. The following year it changed its name to the Western Province General Workers' Union, a move which reflected the reality of its structure and operations more accurately. In 1981 it dropped the title 'Western Province' as it had become a national union organising stevedores in the other major harbour cities.

#### Industrial Aid Society

Similar to the Advice Bureau, the IAS in Johannesburg was also firmly under the control of White intellectuals who were

committed to the establishment of a democratic workers' organisation. It was founded in December 1973 and had a Steering Committee at the head of the organisation. The IAS embarked upon organising African workers as well worker education through a sub-committee, the Worker Education Group. The Steering Committee was composed of self-appointed White intellectuals as well as Black workers whereas the Worker Education Group consisted entirely of White intellectuals who were also self-elected.

During the first fifteen months considerable emphasis was placed on worker education with the result that the Worker Education Group became the largest and most important body in the IAS and it effectively took the decisions in the organisation. In order to resolve this anomaly the IAS restructured itself in March 1975 by scrapping the Steering Committee, the Worker Education Group and other sub-committees and consolidating them all into an IAS Executive Committee. It was explicitly decided that the Executive Committee would not have worker representatives serving on it and acknowledged that it was therefore not a representative body. This restructuring constituted a significant advance in facilitating the democratisation of the IAS as it was also decided that worker representatives would be elected onto a separate trade union executive committee and that powers would gradually be transferred to them as and when they requested it.

The actual transformation to democratic structures was to prove a slow and uneven process as power struggles for control by various groups retarded its progress. After considerable debate and conflict in the Executive Committee over whether to start a general or industrial union, it was decided to start

organising workers in the metal industry. After six months of organisational efforts a Branch Executive Committee (BEC) of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) Transvaal branch was finally established in September 1975.

The transfer of power to the union's BEC did however not take place smoothly. Instead, a power struggle developed between intellectuals in MAWU on the one side and the IAS on the other for control over the union and its policy. The IAS was performing administrative and financial services for the union, but some of the Executive members of the IAS felt themselves excluded from the affairs of the union. On the MAWU side the organisers feared that control of the union would be taken over by the IAS if its Executive Committee became too closely involved. There were even considerations on the part of MAWU officials to separate the two organisations. In order to prevent such a rupture a compromise was reached by the formation of a new over-arching organisation with representation on it from both the IAS and MAWU. The new bridging organisation, the Council of Industrial Workers of the Witwatersrand (CIWW), was established in September 1976 with majority representation of the union on both the Council and its executive arm, the Secretariat. CIWW took over most of the functions previously performed by the IAS. These included fund raising, administration and education.

The formation of CIWW was both a step backward and a step forward in the democratisation process of the movement. It was a step backward in that CIWW constituted a structure that was superimposed onto MAWU and the IAS. In particular the Secretariat tended to operate as the executive of the union thereby stifling the development of the union's BEC. Thus IAS members on the CIWW Secretariat were not representative of any worker constituency, but were nonetheless in a position to

exercise some control over MAWU. On the other hand the formation of CIWW was a step forward in that it was a semi-representative body which took over the key functions previously performed by the unrepresentative IAS. CIWW, as an organisation combining representatives of both MAWU and IAS, had also stripped the IAS of the potential control it previously exercised over union funds and administration.

The democratisation of the structures was considerably advanced in July 1978 when CIWW reconstituted itself as the Transvaal region of the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC). The representation of IAS on the TUACC Council was reduced to a minimal two members whereas all the MAWU BEC members were on the Council. The establishment of the Transport and General Workers' Union late in 1978 added yet further weight to worker representatives on the Council and Secretariat.

When FOSATU was founded by amalgamating TUACC and other unions together in April 1979, the principles existent in TUACC were embodied in the structures of FOSATU. Majorities of worker representatives were constitutionally ensured on bodies at all hierarchical levels with only one exception, namely the Executive Committee. Even so the first Executive Committee did have a four to three majority of worker representatives.

From the time of its inception, it thus took almost five years for the IAS to transform itself and the organisations it gave rise to into fully democratic structures. Whereas the unions that were founded were endowed from the outset with democratic structures from the shopfloor up to the Executive levels, the real difficulty over this period was to get the structures of the co-ordinating bodies to be democratic.

## TUACC

When the initial institutions that eventually constituted TUACC were founded in 1972 and 1973, the intellectuals, mainly White, were firmly in control of them. This applied to CAS and the GFWBF. Once again the intellectuals shared a commitment to establishing democratic trade unions. Because of that they ensured that all the unions that were started were all formally structured to allow for control by the workers' elected representatives. Their executive committees, known as Branch Executive Committees (BECs), were brought into life as soon as a sufficient level of organisation had been achieved.

The commitment of the intellectuals in the movement to democracy also led them to construct TUACC in such a manner that workers' control was built into the organisation. TUACC consisted of a Council and Secretariat: the Council was composed of the full BECs of the unions affiliated to it and two representatives from interested parties such as the Institute for Industrial Education. The Secretariat consisted of two representatives nominated by each affiliated union, only one of which could be a paid official of the union, as well as one representative from each affiliated interested party. The principle of worker representative majorities was thus built into both the TUACC Council and Secretariat. Furthermore, only trade union delegates had voting rights on the Council and Secretariat.

## Urban Training Project

The UTP was founded in Johannesburg in 1971 by former TUCSA trade unionist with two White intellectuals as the driving force in the organisation. The initial aim of the UTP was to provide training for African workers on industrial issues, but it soon

assisted in reviving African unions and founding new ones at the request of the workers they were training. The UTP experienced none of the agonising problems the Advice Bureau and IAS went through in establishing trade unions with democratic structures. This was probably due to the fact that the UTP founders were themselves experienced trade unionists. Within the first two years of its existence the UTP had already revived two African unions, helped establish two new unions, and providing educational and other services for a fifth union. It successfully continued its activities and by the end of 1975 it had helped to establish seven new African unions, revived two, and was providing a wide range of services for all of them. The services were basic infrastructural ones and included fund raising, employing union organisers, education as well as administrative and accounting assistance. It also rented office space for many of the unions. The UTP was in fact providing virtually all the vital resources required by most of the unions and playing the role of a co-ordinating body for the unions.

There was however no attempt by the UTP to make itself structurally accountable to the unions it was servicing. It did not endeavour to place control of the organisation in the hands of representatives of the unions it was servicing and co-ordinating. Instead, it carried on as a relatively autonomous organisation with control and direction in the hands of its self-appointed executive committee which consisted of UTP staff and ex-officio members including two Whites with religious and legal qualifications. Some of the UTP staff members on the UTP executive committee did consist of union secretaries and would thus have ensured that union interests were represented. But

actual control of the UTP was in the hands of its own committee which was not made accountable to the unions.

The reason for retaining its relative autonomy, was that the UTP did not consider that its role should be that of a co-ordinating body of the unions it was servicing. That role was to be assumed by the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions which initially consisted of unions serviced by the UTP as well as TUCSA African unions, but the latter group fell away after two or three years.

The Consultative Committee was however inherently limited in that it consisted only of the secretaries of the unions associated with it. This made the Consultative Committee an oligarchic body as it comprised only a single official from each of the unions. Furthermore the Consultative Committee had no constitution and no formal organisation with offices and a staff of its own, but only met on an ad hoc basis if and when issues arose. It was therefore impossible for the Consultative Committee to perform the co-ordinating tasks required by the unions even though collective policy decisions regarding the unions were being taken by the Consultative Committee and not by the UTP.

A double disjunction had therefore developed between the intended and actual roles played by both the UTP and the Consultative Committee. The UTP did not wish to perform the function of an over-arching co-ordinating body, but it had to do so, whereas the Consultative Committee did want to perform that role, but was unable to do so. Up to 1979 both organisations were also oligarchic in that neither had structures through which union worker representatives could serve on their controlling bodies. Many of these anomalies and unrepresentative structures were however removed the following year when the Council of

Unions of South Africa (CUSA) was formed.

Of the four trade union groupings it was thus only the Consultative Committee of Black trade unions which had not succeeded by 1979 in creating democratic structures at the level of a co-ordinating body of the trade unions. The remaining groupings had succeeded in creating formal structures that were democratic at all levels of the organisation in that they allowed for worker majorities at each of the levels.

However, while the creation of democratic structures was essential for democracy to emerge in the independent union movement, it was by no means sufficient to ensure that workers took control of the unions. Democratic practices with workers actually taking the decisions had to be established in the structures. This entailed building up the workers' capacities to take command of the structures and proved to be a more difficult and time-consuming challenge than creating the appropriate structures.

## 2. Developing Workers' Capacity to Control

The independent unions under consideration did not delay the development of the workers' abilities to assume control of their organisations until the democratic structures were fully in existence, but commenced with the task right from the time of the unions' inception. As has been pointed out above in the section on the unions' strategies for power, the central task which the unions set themselves was to build up their power base on democratic shopfloor organisation. Although the TUACC unions in Natal did not immediately give shop stewards a central role in the unions and the Consultative Committee unions did not organise the workplace as intensively as the other union groupings did,

the most important terrain on which workers' capacities to take control of the unions was developed was through shopfloor organisation. This entailed not only formal and regular training by union organisers, but learning through experience and struggle in negotiations and conflict with management.

Formal education and training of workers was undertaken by all the union groupings at the outset as a way of advancing workers' knowledge and understanding and preparing them to take control of the unions. Although they all commenced by placing great emphasis on worker education and training, their experiences diverged widely as time went on.

The Advice Bureau initially laid stress on the political and ideological education of workers although it also taught workers their rights under labour laws and how to set about forming registered works committees. But much of the training was inappropriate in that it was too remote from the workers' experiences and workplace concerns. The organisational demands on intellectuals worked to the detriment of formal education as less and less time and resources were allocated to it. Separate education sessions were eventually no longer held so that by 1979 the GWU had to all effects abandoned formal education.

In the IAS formal education was also initially inappropriate for similar reasons. It also became less prominent, but it never dwindled away completely as a continuity was maintained by Phil Bonner, a university lecturer who did not become embroiled in worker organisation. Up to 1979 education therefore continued at a low level for the union BECs and advanced shop stewards. The contents became more closely linked with organisational issues over time. Formal education was therefore sustained at a low level for the more advanced worker representatives because the unions could draw on outside

resources.

Experiences with formal education in the UTP took a very different path. From the outset their courses were practically linked with the workers' situation and organisational needs. Since the UTP retained its relative autonomy and set store by its educational service to the unions, formal training was continued throughout the period. In contrast with the other organisations, the UTP was able to sustain worker education by allocating sufficient resources to it and not being subject to the same pressures from organisational demands as the unions were.

The Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) in Natal was also initially linked with the TUACC unions as a relatively autonomous body. Its worker education courses dealt with worker issues in factories and unions as well as helping the worker understand society, but, unlike the UTP, they were general correspondence courses not specifically geared to meet the needs of the TUACC unions at the time. TUACC however decided that the IIE should specifically serve the educational and organisational needs of the unions. Consequently a struggle for control of the IIE and its direction ensued between intellectuals in TUACC and the IIE chairperson which was won by the TUACC intellectuals. The IIE thus came under the control of TUACC late in 1975. The crisis the TUACC unions experienced during 1976 and the heavy demands union organisation demanded however placed such enormous burdens on the shoulders of the intellectuals in TUACC that they were unable to continue running formal education courses through the IIE. Education in the TUACC (later FOSATU) unions therefore receded and by 1979 it was at a very low level. During those years intensive training of shop stewards and advanced workers on

specifically organisational issues was taking priority in the unions and making heavy demands on the intellectuals' time.

Thus up to 1979 formal education was generally not playing a significant part in developing the workers' capacities to take democratic control of the independent trade unions. Organisational training and experiential learning through shopfloor struggles was playing a more important part in building up their confidence and ability in learning how to run and control the unions.

As a result of these activities worker leadership started emerging in the unions and co-ordinating bodies of the movement during the 1970s. Worker leaders emerged on the shopfloor as shop stewards and as representatives on the unions' executive committees, as well as union organisers and co-ordinating body officials. Many of these leaders wielded considerable influence in the unions. Some of them, such as June Rose Nala, developed into intellectuals in the union movement. The emergence of worker leadership was however not enough to ensure that the unions were democratic. It was also necessary for leaders to be representative of the workers and accountable to them.

### 3. Establishing Representative and Accountable Leadership

In all the union groupings the level at which worker leaders were most representative was on the shopfloor. Besides the daily contact which shop stewards and works committee members had with their rank and file members, the committees tended to hold regular weekly meetings at which they had to report on their shopfloor actions to their fellow committee members and the union organiser. Sometimes some of the more advanced workers in the factories attended such meetings which helped increase the accountability of the representatives. Some unions, most

notably the WPGWU and the UAW, placed a further emphasis on general factory meetings which were held monthly. Such meetings greatly facilitated both the representativeness and accountability of the shop stewards and committee members. The Consultative Committee unions, however, did not place the same degree of emphasis on committee and general factory meetings. While union committee members could still be held accountable by the rank and file at the workplace, less opportunities existed for this to happen outside the workplace under the auspices of the union than with the other union groupings.

The executive committees of the unions constituted the level where the next most accountable worker leadership had developed in the independent trade union movement up to the end of the 1970s. There was however an unevenness in the manner and extent to which the executive committees in the various union groupings were operating and being held accountable.

In the Natal region of FOSATU only MAWU and the NUTW had a sufficient number of well-organised factories to ensure a stable representation of elected shop steward representatives on their BECs. These unions also had active shop stewards that could make sure that the BEC members reported back to them on a regular basis. The other two Natal unions analysed in the thesis did not yet have stable and large enough bases that could ensure a continuity of representatives on their BECs and that could also hold the union organisers accountable to them.

In the Transvaal region of FOSATU it was only MAWU that clearly had a stabilised BEC with strong representation from the factory floor. No less than eleven factories of which seven were deemed to be well organised were continuously represented on the BEC in 1979. The BEC was however not deemed to be fully

representative and accountable at that time by the regional secretary of MAWU. He was of the opinion that so much effort was being put into stabilising the BEC and getting its members to participate in the affairs of the union, that they were not bringing work place issues from their shop steward committees to BEC meetings. Conversely, he also felt that the BEC members were not systematically reporting back about union affairs to their shop stewards committees. The BEC members could therefore not be held properly accountable by the shop stewards. Only two other unions of FOSATU in Transvaal were sufficiently organised to have elected BECs, but their representation was not very wide. The remaining four unions in the region were not sufficiently advanced organisationally or had experienced too many setbacks to have functioning BECs.

The unions of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions mostly had operating Executive Committees by 1979. However, the Executive members were elected at AGMs of the unions and were not considered as factory representatives on the Committee. They therefore did not develop active systems of representation and accountability to shopfloor committees in the unions. In four of the Consultative Committee unions conflicts emerged from 1977 onwards as Executive members started challenging the authority of the union secretaries. To the extent that they succeeded in wresting control of union affairs from the hands of the secretary they did increase union democracy. It was however a form of democracy that was remote from the rank and file. Workers in the Consultative Committee unions were therefore not in control of their unions as the Executive Committees were not made directly and actively representative nor accountable to them.

The WPGWU on the other hand went to the opposite extreme and

tried to develop a form of participatory democracy instead of representative democracy at the executive level of the union. When the Controlling Committee was established in 1977 it was decided that the general meetings of the factories could elect any two representatives, not necessarily factory committee members, onto the Controlling Committee. It also decided not to elect an Executive of the Controlling Committee which was a large body consisting of 34 members.

The unintended consequence of the union's attempt at participatory democracy was to establish oligarchic practices. The general meetings of the factories tended to elect Controlling Committee representatives who were not factory committee members in order to share out responsibilities. However these representatives were not well-informed on shopfloor or union matters and therefore could not participate meaningfully in Controlling Committee proceedings. The end-result was to increase the influence of the organisers and to reduce their accountability to the workers. In addition the non-election of an Executive of the Controlling Committee meant that greater independence and power was placed in the hands of the organisers. This was because the Controlling Committee only met monthly on account of its size which was not frequently enough to enable the organisers to bring policy decisions and other strategic matters to the Controlling Committee to decide.

The way in which these limitations of the Controlling Committee was overcome was to move towards a system of representative democracy. The constitution was amended to make it a requirement that the Controlling Committee members had to be elected from amongst the factory committee members. An Executive of the Controlling Committee was also elected. The

Executive met weekly which enabled worker representatives on the highest level of the union to develop a greater control over union affairs.

The level at which representativeness and accountability of union leadership was hardest to attain was on the co-ordinating bodies of the unions. The WPGWU, being a general union operating only in the greater Cape Town region up to 1979, did not yet require a co-ordinating body.

In the case of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions there were no worker representatives on the Committee which comprised only union secretaries. The Consultative Committee was thus oligarchic in structure and it was therefore impossible to infuse democracy at the level of worker control into it. Even at the union executive level the secretaries took decisions on the Consultative Committee that did not always carry the approval of some of the unions' Executive Committees. This became most manifest over the question whether the Consultative unions should join FOSATU or not when serious rifts developed between two of the union secretaries and their Executive Committees. The Consultative Committee could therefore not be regarded as a democratic co-ordinating body.

In FOSATU the Natal region had, by 1979, years of experience in the problem of trying to make co-ordinating bodies representative and accountable to workers. Although the TUACC constitution was democratic in that it allowed for a majority of worker representatives on both its Council and Secretariat, it took many years before worker representatives developed a meaningful say in TUACC, especially on the Secretariat. The first problem it experienced was that very few worker representatives attended the TUACC Secretariat meetings and they were completely outnumbered by union officials. Decisions were

therefore effectively being taken by union officials without any real accountability. This situation carried on for more than two years before a greater number of BEC members attended Secretariat meetings. From April 1976 onwards the number of worker representatives more or less equalled the number of officials attending meetings.

But then a second problem became more acute. It was the problem of ensuring that the BEC members were speaking on behalf of their unions and not representing their own personal position on issues. Underlying this problem was the fact that the union BECs were not taking sufficient steps to ensure that their representatives on the Secretariat were properly representing them on the BEC. By 1979 one of the unions, MAWU, had found a way of overcoming the problem. The MAWU BEC passed resolutions which had to be tabled at the Secretariat meetings. By so doing it prevented its representatives from taking sectarian positions on important issues affecting the union. This practice was carried on when the FOSATU Regional Executive Committee replaced the TUACC Secretariat in April 1979. In the Natal region FOSATU had thus made considerable headway in trying to ensure that a representative form of democracy did exist at the co-ordinating of unions level.

For democracy to exist in unions it is not only necessary for worker leaders who serve as office-bearers to be representative and accountable. It is equally necessary that the union officials, especially the organisers and intellectuals, have to represent workers' interests and aspirations and be able to give an account of their activities to workers.

#### 4. Tensions between Democracy and Leadership

All the union groupings considered in the thesis shared the common experience that control and leadership of the initial organisations was in the hands of their founders. In all cases the founding leaders constituted White intellectuals and some Africans who usually had prior trade union experience. The White intellectuals however played a far more significant role in shaping the policy, direction and structures of the unions and co-ordinating bodies that subsequently emerged. They all shared in common the intention of building up democratic trade unions with control ultimately situated in the hands of workers.

The task of establishing workers' control was made particularly difficult for the independent unions by the socio-political composition of the unions. The overwhelming majority of members of the unions were Africans with at most a lower primary school education which barely made them literate, were located in the least skilled occupations in industry where they tended to have no control over the application of their labour-power and were not allowed any say over their working conditions. Added to this was the fact that Africans were denied any participation in the political processes of the country. Even their freedom to decide where they would live and work was removed from them by the bureaucratically enforced influx control laws.

Given such a socio-political background most African workers who joined the unions had, at the time of joining, not acquired the capacities to plan the most appropriate organisational structures of the unions, nor were they accustomed to decision-making over issues that affected their working lives. Furthermore they lacked a thorough understanding of the political economy which was essential in drawing up the plans and

strategies of the unions.

These social and political realities of South Africa did however not imply that African workers were intellectually and politically inept, or that they could arbitrarily be manipulated by intellectuals. Most workers had an acute awareness of what was in their own interests, many of them had had previous trade union and political experience, while there were also workers who had immense intellectual skills, the potential of which had never been allowed to develop before, but did so once they joined the unions and could established themselves as worker leaders. Thus from the start the workers set certain parameters, defined by the workers' understanding of their own situation, within which intellectuals could direct and lead them.

But given the social and political background of the workers, the role of leadership, particularly intellectual leadership, was still of vital importance to the independent unions. It was also unavoidable that, at the outset, the intellectual leaders would, of necessity, have to play an influential and even dominant role in the unions. A tension thus developed between the essential need for leadership in the unions and the leaders' objective of establishing democratic workers' control of the unions.

The basic way in which the intellectual leaders in the independent union movement sought to reduce their dominance and influential position was to build democratic workers' control from the shopfloor level up to the highest structural level in the union groupings. To the extent that the unions succeeded in establishing workers' control the dominance of intellectuals was reduced.

The emphasis which the union groupings placed on shopfloor

organisation also increased the opportunities of rank and file members to keep organisers accountable to them. It was however impossible for workers to develop complete control over organisers because organisers spent most, if not all, of their time off the shopfloor where the workers spent their working days. Nonetheless, organisers would have to account to workers what they had done during periods inbetween meetings and workers were generally quick to spot organisers who were not acting in their interests. As a result a number of organisers in all the union groupings, but more notably FOSATU and WPGWU, were dismissed from time to time by the unions at the workers' insistence.

It was also necessary for the union groupings to keep intellectual leaders, most of whom were Whites at the outset, accountable and responsible to the rank and file members in the unions. The union groupings adopted different approaches to achieve this objective.

FOSATU and the WPGWU had adopted broadly similar non-racial approaches by not hesitating to give White intellectuals prominent positions in the unions if they were the most competent people to perform the tasks. This undoubtedly gave the White intellectuals immense power and influence in the first few years of the unions' existence. However, over time the dominance of the intellectuals was reduced to the extent that democratic structures and practices within these union groupings were developed. As has been shown above, the strongest workers' control had been established on the shopfloor, then at the executive level of the unions, while least effective workers' control existed at the level of co-ordination of the union groupings.

In the Transvaal region the formation of FOSATU in April

1979 however increased the problems of co-ordinating union activities immensely as their number leaped up from two to seven and three different traditions of trade union organisation were united in a tight-knit federation. Added to this was the vast size of the P-W-V region. As a result of these factors the administration and co-ordination required for union organisation increased dramatically. In addition to FOSATU's constitutional bodies with worker majority representatives, the unions and FOSATU officials also started up extra-constitutional committees consisting of officials only. These committees played an important part in the co-ordination and administration of union affairs, but were not representative or accountable to the workers.

While the formation of FOSATU had thus strengthened the independent trade union movement by uniting a number of unions, it had however reduced democracy in the Transvaal region. The democratic structures created in the region were not sufficient to cope with the unions' organisational problems and unrepresentative structures consequently emerged. The Transvaal region of FOSATU had thereby sacrificed democracy for greater strength in the movement.

Although intellectual leaders had remained influential, by 1979 the situation had been reached in FOSATU where most of the very influential ones were no longer Whites. It was probably an accurate perception by the regional secretary of FOSATU in Transvaal, that a situation had been reached towards the end of 1979 where the six most influential leaders in FOSATU each had their constituencies which they would first have to canvass and gain the support of before they could take any initiative. Of these six only two were Whites, the remaining four were two Coloured and two African general secretaries of unions.

In the WPGWU there was an awareness on the part of the White intellectuals that, because they were Whites, the accusation of White control of the union could be made against them. There was thus a conscious policy on their part that, when there were different ways in which things could be done, the method that would strengthen democracy and increase workers' control would always be chosen.

In spite of these efforts on the part of FOSATU and the WPGWU it was still accepted by both union groupings that White intellectuals were still very influential, but that their power had been enormously reduced since the founding of the unions. In both groupings final decisions were being taken by committees dominated by worker representatives who could not easily be swayed by intellectuals to vote one way or another.

The UTP and Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions took a completely different approach to the potential problem of White intellectual domination of the unions. They adopted the policy that only Africans may be appointed to leadership positions in the unions. Although they prevented the domination of the union by White intellectuals, it did not resolve the problem of domination of the unions by Black intellectuals and leaders.

The policy adopted by the Consultative Committee unions in fact led them not to pay sufficient attention to the problem of domination of the unions by African leaders, who were usually the secretaries of the unions. Nor did they put as much effort into building up the power and influence of worker representatives on the shopfloor in the affairs of the unions as the other unions did. As a result thereof power struggles developed within three of the Consultative Committee unions over control of the

unions between the union secretaries and the elected executive committee members after 1976. The significant feature of these power struggles were that neither the rank and file members, nor their shop stewards, participated meaningfully in them at all. Thus by 1979 the Consultative Committee unions had not yet developed the appropriate structures and practices by means of which the intellectual leaders and officials of the unions could be properly controlled by the workers and made fully accountable and responsible to the workers.

The independent unions considered in this thesis had thus found the process of democratising themselves to be a considerable challenge. As a first stage all the union groupings, with the exception of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions at the level of the co-ordinating body, had succeeded in establishing democratic structures at all levels of organisation in the movement. Furthermore, the severe organisational demands placed on the unions prevented the union groupings, again with the exception of the UTP's educational service to the Consultative Committee unions, from providing an ongoing educational training of workers that could develop their capacities to take control of the union structures.

Nevertheless worker leaders did emerge from the rank and file of the unions to assume responsibilities from the shopfloor level up to the highest level of administering and co-ordinating the unions' activities. The union groupings achieved varied success in making these worker leaders representative and accountable to them. Greatest success was achieved in the work place with least success at the level of co-ordination. Even so FOSATU made considerable advances in devising a method of keeping union representatives on the Regional Executive Committee in

Natal accountable to the unions.

Another great challenge facing the unions in their democratisation process was to prevent undemocratic domination by the intellectual leadership in the movement. Although the influence of White and other intellectuals in the movement was still considerably high at the end of the seventies, sufficiently democratic structures and practices had been developed by two of the four union groupings to ensure that control was, ultimately, located in the hands of worker representatives at all levels of the organisation. One of two groupings where this was not happening in 1979 was the Consultative Committee which had not yet developed the appropriate structures to enable such control to happen. The other was the Transvaal region of FOSATU whose formation of FOSATU in April 1979 had necessitated the formation of extra-constitutional committees of officials which were playing a key role in administrating and co-ordinating union affairs. Such committees did not have any elected worker representatives on them and could thereby avoid being made accountable to workers.

Democracy could therefore not simply be imposed in the unions constitutionally by creating the appropriate structures. It also required the gradual establishment of the ethic that the unions ought to be democratic and the instilling of democratic practices on the part of the workers. While such control was still very imperfect by 1979, the ethic of democratic workers' control had been established and workers were in the process of solidifying the practice of operating democratically in the independent unions.

## Chapter 14

### Theoretical and Empirical Conclusions

The major findings of the thesis are presented in this chapter under five broad themes. They are:

- the development of the independent unions during the 1970s,
- the strategies for power on the part of the unions,
- the democratisation process in the unions,
- the role of intellectual leadership in the unions, and
- the political significance of the unions in the 1970s.

The empirical findings are, where appropriate, linked to the theories of trade unions and related issues that were presented in chapter one. The extent to which they confirmed, modified or challenged the theories is considered. Finally, the way in which the independent unions' activities in the 1970s was politically important is presented.

#### 1. Development of the Independent Unions in the 1970s

The development of the independent unions up to 1979 can be divided into two stages. The first stage, starting from the inception of the unions up to the end of 1976 can be termed the survival era of the unions. During this period the newly formed unions were struggling for survival against a hostile state which frequently used its repressive powers against the fledgling unions, and an equally hostile management which engaged in a concerted counter-offensive against the unions. In addition workers' fears of trade unionism based on the state's repression of SACTU in the early 1960s had to be overcome as well. This period was characterised by the unions' determined effort to gain a foothold in the work place by either obtaining recognition of

the union or of a statutory works committee organisationally linked with the union.

The unions had very little success in their endeavours to gain recognition during this era and it was only the NUTW which managed to sign an agreement with Smith and Nephew. There was considerably more success on the part of the unions in forming statutory works committees, but these committees were extremely limited in their bargaining power.

During 1976 a series of events and circumstances administered hard blows to the independent unions. These were the deepening economic recession, disastrous disputes two unions entered into, other organisational mistakes by some unions, the uprising sparked by events in Soweto in June 1976, and, not least of all, a round of severe state bannings of activists in the independent trade union movement in November. The state had probably intended to deal a death-blow to the independent unions, but the unions already had sufficient organisational depth to survive the repression. Nonetheless, at the end of 1976 the independent unions were at their lowest ebb since being founded.

The second stage the independent unions entered in 1977 can be characterised as the period of intensive struggle for recognition on the part of the unions which came to an end in 1979 when the Wiehahn Commission proposed a change in state policy which granted legal recognition of African unions. Up to 1979 the state bureaucracy however remained strongly opposed to African trade unionism as did the companies organised by the independent unions, including subsidiaries of multinational corporations. Thus although the independent unions struggled intensively for recognition during this period as well, they achieved remarkably little formal success. At the end of 1979

they had signed only two comprehensive recognition agreements which incorporated grievance and disciplinary procedures and two provisional agreements.

The formal recognition agreements however do not adequately reflect the organisational strength and advances the independent unions had made by 1979. This is because a number of the shop stewards committees had obtained informal recognition of varying kinds from management and because some statutory works committees under the unions' auspices were also taking up work place issues with management. In all, the independent unions analysed in the thesis considered themselves to have in the vicinity of 80 well organised and a further 30 reasonably organised work places in 1979. FOSATU, which generally set itself the most stringent standards, considered about 20 of its plants to be well organised while the Consultative Committee unions regarded about 46 and the WPGWU 14 of their plants as well organised. Their total signed up membership was approximately 44 500 in 1979. Of these 18 600 were in FOSATU, 22 900 in the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions and 3 000 in the WPGWU. The independent unions were thus well entrenched by the end of the 1970s and had laid sound foundations based on strong shopfloor organisation. This solid base enabled the unions to make rapid advances and grow considerably in size and strength in the ensuing years.

But in spite of the organisational advances of the independent unions during the the 1970s they were still relatively small, weak and unadvanced when compared to the trade union movement in advanced capitalist societies such as Britain and America. It is for these reasons that the liberal pluralist theory of trade unions by Flanders and Fox are largely inapplicable to the independent unions as they were in the 1970s.

Flanders and Fox considered the principle role of trade

unions to be the regulation of work place conditions through a system of rules derived from collective bargaining. By so doing trade unions curtail 'the arbitrary will of management' and thus restrict managerial prerogative. But in the 1970s the independent unions were not primarily engaged in challenging managerial prerogative at the work place, but engaged in a grim struggle for survival and trying to force a reluctant management to recognise the unions.

The struggle for recognition was not won until after 1979 when, aided by the change in state policy, the unions gained sufficient strength to force management to grant them recognition. The number of formal recognition agreements thereupon mushroomed and by the end of 1983 the independent unions had signed over 400 agreements. It was only once these agreements incorporated grievance, disciplinary and retrenchment procedures that the independent unions started challenging managerial prerogative meaningfully. (1) The independent unions then entered a further stage in their struggle. They discovered it was not enough to have the procedural rules curtailing arbitrary managerial behaviour agreed to on paper, but these rules had to be applied in practice on the shopfloor. They thus entered into severe conflict with management in the early 1980s over the enforcement of the procedural agreements. A strike wave consequently erupted on the East Rand in the second half of 1981 in which more than half of the 50 strikes were challenges to managerial prerogative over such issues as unfair dismissals and the arbitrary action of foremen. (2)

The limitation of the liberal pluralist theory of trade unions is thus that it is only applicable to a particular stage of trade union development which requires certain specific

conditions in the social formation in which they operate. Trade unions have to be well-entrenched, relatively powerful, and with a legitimacy in the eyes of both the state and capital. None of these conditions held for the independent unions in South Africa in the 1970s although they did start applying increasingly so as the 1980s proceeded. Similar criticisms can be levelled at Hyman's theory of trade unions although he did lay stress on the fact that historical specificities had to be taken into account. Even so, he tended to base his perceptions on the role of trade unions on the experience of British unions after the Second World War.

Even though the independent unions were still relatively weak at the end of the 1970s they were nonetheless gradually building up their strength during that period. The strategies for power which the union groupings adopted and the extent to which they succeeded are considered next.

## 2. Strategies for Power

The independent trade unions considered in the thesis all shared in common the fundamental strategy of striving to build up their power by means of democratic shopfloor organisation. Generally, the greater the in-depth work place organisation taking place in unions, the more successful they were in acquiring a power base. The Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions, which placed less emphasis on intensive shopfloor organisation than FOSATU and the WPGWU did, accordingly had a weaker power base at the end of the 1970s. This was subsequently demonstrated by the advances the trade union groupings made in gaining work place recognition. At the end of 1983 the FOSATU unions had no less than 285 formal recognition agreements whereas the unions in CUSA, which was more or less the

successor of the Consultative Committee, had less than a quarter of that with only 62 agreements. (3)

In the thesis I also examined the strategies which the independent unions adopted in order to gain power. In addition to placing a primary focus on intensive work place organisation, the unions were more successful in accumulating power when their structures and practices gave a greater say to shopfloor representatives in the running of the union, when they used statutory works committees as a way of gaining managerial recognition of committees elected under the auspices of the unions, by gaining recognition from management of both shop stewards and union officials rather than negotiating with only worker representatives, when organising along industrial lines rather than operating as general unions, and by strategically selecting factories to organise instead of organising plants indiscriminately.

Industrial disputes also advanced the independent trade unions' strength on some occasions when their members went on strike. An immense impetus to the formation and growth of the unions was initially provided by the strike wave in Durban. Once the unions were founded and their members engaging in strikes the key issue which decided whether a union would gain in strength from a strike was whether it managed to retain the employment of its striking members at the plant. If all the strikers or the leaders of the strikers were dismissed, the union was weakened by the strike. The factors that assisted unions in retaining their membership were when workers were relatively skilled and in key positions and could not be replaced at short notice, when workers stayed at their machines instead of leaving the plants or work sites, when the police did not intervene in

the disputes, when workers realistically assessed management's threats and returned to work once they had given workers a final ultimatum to do so, when strikes were planned beforehand and not spontaneous actions on the part of workers, and when the workforce was disciplined and came out on strike and went back in unison.

The theoretical writing considered in this thesis paid remarkably little attention to the strategies by means of which trade unions have acquired their power. Even though Hyman and Fryer asserted that trade unions were 'first and foremost a source and medium of power' and identified determinants of union power such as the strategic importance of the workers organised, they did not study the process through which unions accumulated power. There have, on the other hand, been studies on factors affecting trade union growth by Bain and Price as well as Undy and others, but union growth cannot assume to provide a measure of union power. While unions generally increase in strength when they increase in size, they do not necessarily do so as there are numerous other factors that influence the organisational strength of unions. The study of unions' strategies to grow in strength therefore required a different focus from an examination of factors that would increase the growth of union membership.

### 3. Democratisation of the Unions

The independent unions virtually all started as oligarchic organisations in which the leadership, particularly the intellectual leaders, all played a dominant and highly influential role. The intellectual leaders shared a common commitment to creating democratic unions and during the period under consideration in the thesis the unions went through three

phases of a democratisation process.

The first phase was the creation of democratic structures in which majorities of worker representatives were established at all levels of hierarchy in the unions and co-ordinating bodies. This process took up to four years to achieve from the foundation of the unions.

The second phase, which did not await the completion of the first phase, but started roughly at the same time, was the development of the workers' capacities to take effective control of the structures created in the unions and the co-ordinating bodies. This phase took longer to complete and was not yet fully accomplished by the end of the 1970s. There had however been sufficient development of workers to facilitate the emergence of many worker leaders who assumed responsible positions as office-bearers and officials of the unions and co-ordinating bodies.

The third phase of the process, which also did not await completion of the first two phases, but started from the outset as well, was to make the leadership of the unions representative of the members and accountable to them. This, too, had been achieved by the end of the period under consideration, but in a differential manner. The most representative and accountable leadership existed on the shopfloor level and the least so at the level of co-ordinating bodies, with the union executives falling somewhere between the two.

In relating the empirical findings to the theories on trade union democracy presented in the thesis, the approach of Edelstein and Warner which stresses formal structures and the need for open competition in election to the top posts of a union is not adequate. In addition to formal democratic structures it

is equally important, if not more important, to develop ongoing democratic practices in which the rank and file are involved and ensure that their elected representatives and officials remain accountable to them.

The findings also turned Michels' theory of oligarchy on its head. Instead of the unions starting as democratic organisations and ending up as oligarchies, the independent unions commenced as oligarchic organisations and underwent a process of democratisation in the first seven or so years of their life. The unions did not however become fully democratic with completely effective workers' control, nor did union democracy increase continuously and smoothly throughout the period.

The life span of the unions under consideration were however too short to establish whether a period in which democratisation was on the ascent in the unions would be followed by a period when oligarchy would become dominant. There were however occasional setbacks to democracy in the unions, but these setbacks happened when the unions sacrificed democracy for the sake of achieving greater collective power. This happened with the formation of TUACC in Natal when planning, co-ordination and the development of strategies effectively fell into the hands of union secretaries for more than two years up to about April 1976. It happened again with the formation of FOSATU in April 1979, but in the Transvaal region. Once again planning and administration fell into the hands of union and federation officials, but this time in extra-constitutional committees that sprung up. This was due to the fact that the number of unions increased overnight from two in TUACC to seven in FOSATU thereby requiring far more bureaucratic administration than the constitutionally democratic structures of FOSATU could cope with.

The contrary also happened in that the WPGWU on occasions sacrificed greater strength to ensure more democracy in the union. This happened with regard to the union's policy on recognition in which only worker representatives could negotiate with management. The principle underlying this policy was that union officials were never to take over or undermine the task of worker representatives. Although this ensured greater representativeness and accountability on the part of negotiators the union also weakened itself by excluding officials who usually had greater independence and expertise than worker representatives.

The experience of the WPGWU also confirmed the findings of the Webbs with regards to participatory democracy. Attempts on the part of the WPGWU to introduce forms of participatory democracy resulted had the unintended consequence of increasing oligarchy within the union instead. This happened when the Consultative Committee was established in 1977 and it was decided that its representatives need not be workers committee members and that no executive of the Controlling Committee would be elected. But instead of increasing the number of worker representatives who took control of the union these measures actually reduced the hold which the Controlling Committee had over the union. This was because ordinary rank and file members elected onto the Controlling Committee were unable to participate at meetings because they were not familiar enough with union affairs, and because the absence of an executive placed full responsibility for running of the union in the hand of union officials in between the monthly Controlling Committee meetings. These were similar to the reasons why British trade unions became oligarchic during the nineteenth century: the unions tried to

retain a form of participatory democracy once they grew large into national unions, but instead they became oligarchic with power vested in the hands of the union secretaries and executive who alone developed all the expertise necessary to run the unions.

#### 4. Harnessing Intellectual Leadership

Intellectual leaders played an immensely important role in the independent unions from the outset. They planned union strategies that helped to ensure their survival against a hostile state and concerted managerial counter-offensive, they administered and co-ordinated union affairs, they helped train and educate workers in trade union organisation, they assisted the unions in obtaining vitally required finance from abroad, and they made strategic use of legal action to help the unions gain a foothold and make organisational advances. The intellectuals, most of whom were Whites at the time the unions were founded, thus played an immensely important role in helping the unions to consolidate themselves and in building up their organisational strength.

The intellectuals thus played a dominant role in the independent trade union movement and were extremely influential, especially at the outset and during the first few years of the unions' existence. However, they also shared a commitment to creating democratic trade unions in which workers would have the ultimate control. They succeeded in this to a considerable extent, but still remained disproportionately influential by the end of 1979.

There was however an unevenness between the union groupings in the extent to which they had succeeded in harnessing the direction intellectuals were giving to the unions. In the non-

racial unions where White intellectuals played a significant part there tended to be a greater awareness and sensitivity to the issue of intellectual and leadership domination of the unions. As a result those unions put in a greater effort in creating democratic structures and facilitating the emergence of worker leaders from the shopfloor which could contain the influence of the White intellectual leaders. In the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions there was however less sensitivity to the fact that Black intellectuals could dominate and direct unions undemocratically. As a result these unions had not created as effective structures and practices by means of which the leadership of the unions could be controlled by workers on the shopfloor.

The role of intellectuals in the independent unions during the 1970s thus contradicted the conceptions Michels and Perlman had of intellectuals in trade unions. Michels was wrong in that the intellectuals, with very few exceptions, did not become disillusioned and withdraw from the trade union movement. Nor did they let an impossibilism with hard-line ideological programmes that were bound to kill the organisations dominate. While intellectual leaders certainly did hold ideological positions strongly and adopted mistaken strategies on several occasions, they were sufficiently open-minded and in touch with the realities of South Africa to adapt and consequently adopt more realistic strategies.

The intellectuals were also not in fundamental conflict with the rank and file workers by trying to impose their own ideology on reluctant workers as Perlman would suggest. They were generally not granted a legitimate leadership role unless they were perceived by the workers to be acting broadly in the

workers' interests. At the same time structures and practices were being created which increasingly enabled workers to express their aspirations and have them implemented. Major clashes of interests between intellectuals and workers were therefore not characteristics of the independent unions in the 1970s.

The definition and rôle ascribed by C.Wright Mills to union-made intellectuals accorded far more closely to the leadership role intellectuals played in the unions. The limitation of Mills's approach is that he assumed the presence of union-made intellectuals to be unproblematic in the creation and maintenance of democracy in trade unions.

While Gramsci's conceptualisation of intellectuals and the role of organic intellectuals in proletarian movements proved to be valuable, White intellectuals in the independent trade union movement could not be regarded as organic intellectuals as defined by Gramsci. This was because it was impossible for them to organise African workers in the field of culture.

White intellectuals were estranged from African workers by the South African social formation in numerous ways. White intellectuals mostly came from bourgeois or petty bourgeois backgrounds as opposed to the proletariat upbringing of African workers; educationally White intellectuals usually had tertiary level education and holding degrees while most African workers did not get beyond primary education; the legal requirement to live in racially segregated residential areas meant that White intellectuals could not live in African townships, but in vastly different social communities; finally the language and cultural backgrounds of White intellectuals and African workers were distinct with Whites usually unable to speak an African language.

Given the existence of such enormous socio-cultural distinctions between White intellectuals and African workers it

was not possible for the intellectuals to gain a proper understanding of the contents and idiom through which to conduct a cultural structure. An example of the cultural organisation which White intellectuals in the independent trade union movement were totally unable to conduct is well depicted by the following quote:

And at the apex of working class culture in South Africa stand the songs and poetry of Vuyasili Mini. Mini was a union organiser from Port Elizabeth in the 1950s and early 1960s. As a cultural activist Mini was not content to write songs and poetry. He formed a highly successful cultural club under the auspices of the union. He used his songs as an organising tool with tremendous effect at union meetings and demonstrations.  
(4)

Up to 1979 there was not a conscious effort to organise workers culturally by White intellectuals. In this respect it would therefore be inappropriate to try and define them as organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense. To what extent their inability to be cultural organisers disadvantaged the unions would be hard to estimate, but at best White intellectuals could facilitate the emergence of such cultural organisation in the unions as subsequently happened in the FOSATU unions.

##### 5. Political Significance of the Independent Unions

The independent unions generally did not engage in political issues which would have brought them into direct confrontation with the state during the 1970s. The only significant exception to this was when the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau lent strategic and organisational support to the call by students for a stay-away in September 1976 to protest against Bantu Education and detentions - and paid a high price for it in terms of state repression. The unions also did not affiliate to any other movements during the period. In Natal FOSATU decided not to

join Inkatha after being invited to do so by Chief Buthelezi in 1975. For the most part the unions concentrated their energies on creating bridgeheads into the work place and building up their organisational strength on the shopfloor.

The strategy of the independent unions formed a strong contrast with the policy of SACTU which took up the issue of state power from its inception on the grounds that economic exploitation could not be divorced from the political oppression of Blacks in South Africa. But it was mainly on account of SACTU's policy and the harsh state repression it invoked that the independent unions decided to restrict their activities to the shopfloor. One of the first tasks of the independent unions was to overcome the fears of trade unionism which African workers had as a result of SACTU's repression. In addition to that the state had, in the interim period, armed itself with even harsher repressive laws and machinery than it had during the 1950s and early 1960s.

This did not however mean that the strategy adopted by the independent trade unions in the 1970s was politically irrelevant. The strategy was in fact politically highly significant, but its significance lay in the fact that the independent unions were putting all their energies into organising and building up the collective strength of the Black working class where it was potentially most powerful, namely at the point where they exerted their labour-power. By concentrating on organising workers where they were engaged in production the independent unions were adopting a strategy that would potentially maximise their strength. The power which they so acquired could be wielded at the appropriate time and under suitable circumstances in support of political demands which would advance working class interests.

The policy of the independent unions to concentrate on

building up their power in the work place also assisted them in their initial struggle for survival. By not confronting the state directly while they were still weak and fragile, the state was never provoked into using its full repressive might against the independent unions. The strategy also enabled the independent unions to exert all their energies on increasing their organisational strength in the work place.

The political strategy of the independent unions paid off in that they not only survived the 1970s when the state was still opposed to African trade unionism, but became strong enough to start exerting their collective power on the shopfloor in support of broader working class demands. A very important feature of the independent unions' collective action was that they went beyond mere symbolic protest actions which the system could easily tolerate, but that they started inflicting real economic costs on the system. Thus when Dr Neil Aggett, Transvaal secretary of the Food and Canning Workers' Union, died while in detention approximately 100 000 workers, of whom roughly two-thirds were from the independent unions considered in the thesis, downed tools on 11 February 1982 for up to half an hour to demonstrate their anger with the state. (5)

In November 1984 the independent unions engaged in their most significant political act up to that time when they supported the call for a two-day stay-away by the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) on the Witwatersrand. In the ensuing mass stay-away supported by anything from 300 000 to 800 000 workers, FOSATU played the most prominent organisational role, supported by CUSA and other independent unions. In some industries in the East Rand and Vaal regions, stay-away levels reached at least 90%. The demands of the stay-away included

the withdrawal of the military and police from Black townships and an end to housing rent increases. Approximately 400 000 students also boycotted schools for the duration of the boycott demanding democratically elected students representatives councils in Black schools. (6)

Thus as the independent unions grew stronger and more resilient they started engaging in campaigns with broader political demands in co-operation with other organisations.

Reflecting theoretically on developments in the progressive and independent trade union movement over the thirty year period commencing in 1955 it would appear that political unionism as spelled out by Lambert is flawed as a form of trade unionism in the South African social formation. Its essential mistake is the simultaneous interlacing of the economic struggle against exploitation in the work place with the political struggle against oppression in one and the same form of organisation, namely trade unions, in a social formation where the state relies on repression, rather than consent, to rule. It is a mistake to do so in the first place because its engagement in the politics of liberation is bound to incur the repressive wrath of the state against it. (7) But it is also a mistake because trade unions are institutions which are organisationally best suited to take up the struggle of workers in the work place for control of production and the allocation of financial resources of companies and other enterprises. Trade unions are thus the most suitable vehicle with which the working class can try to ensure the transformation of class relations in the production process to an industrial democracy free from managerial domination and economic exploitation.

On the other hand, trade unions concentrating on in-depth shopfloor organisation are structurally and organisationally not

the most suitable institutions for taking up issues beyond the shopfloor in a direct and democratic manner. Community organisations with democratic representation in the residential areas would, for instance, be more suitable organisations for taking up community-based issues. Similarly trade unions are also not the most appropriate bodies for taking up the struggle for gaining control of the state and confronting state power directly. Their ultimate weapon against the state is the power to withhold their labour, whereas the state has a multitude of weapons it can bring to bear against trade unions - including the power to repress and destroy the unions. A broad political movement which can confront the state at all levels with a diverse range of strategies would be a more suitable organisation. Thus both for taking up community issues beyond the shopfloor and challenging the state there are more appropriate institutions with different forms of organisation from trade unions.

By placing a primary emphasis on democratic work place organisation it does not mean that trade unions have to be either 'economistic', focussing only on improving wages and working conditions within capitalist relations of production, or 'workerist', which only emphasizes working class leadership in shopfloor issues and not on all fronts. (8) By adopting such a strategy the trade unions could be political by participating in political campaigns with other organisations sharing the same objectives where and when it is in the interests of the Black working class to do so. The particular contribution of the unions in such campaigns would be to strengthen the campaigns' demands by applying their economic power built up arduously over a long period of time by organising workers intensively in the

work place. Such an approach ensures that unions retain their autonomy and it also enables them to retain their legitimacy on two fronts. On the one front they retain it in the eyes of the state, an essential requirement for unions if they are to survive under a repressive regime. On the other front they retain their legitimacy in the eyes of the politically conscious Black masses which is necessary for being deemed relevant to their broader struggle for liberation and whose support they require during phases of intensive struggle.

But there is also a fundamental way in which the very activity of in-depth shopfloor organisation on the part of the unions is political in itself. This arises from the understanding that politics essentially constitutes a power struggle between opposing groups for control over the allocation and use of material and financial resources. The struggle of unions against capital over the frontier of control in the labour process therefore fundamentally constitutes a political act on their part. To put it in other words, it is a struggle with the goal of transforming production to ensure a working class hegemony over the control, allocation and use of resources in the production process. To this immediately needs to be added that trade unions by themselves are unable to achieve such a transformation. A far broader struggle is required to transform the social relations of production in the wider social formation before working class hegemony can feasibly exist in the work place. But the struggles of trade union to push back managerial prerogative help to create the embryo of working class hegemony in the production process which can come to fruition when there is transformation at a societal level.

Such a perspective on the political role of unions thus makes the implicit assumption by Lambert that work place issues

are economic and that the 'transcendence of the economy-politics divide' is only achieved when unions engage directly in 'political struggle' beyond the work place unsatisfactory.

(9) The Marxist-Leninist theory which underplays the role of trade unions in their struggles against capital over the frontier of control in the work place is therefore also inadequate.

Probably the most important political role that the independent unions thus played in the 1970s was to lay the foundations which could assist in the eventual transformation of the social relations of production in the work place. It seems appropriate to let Alec Erwin, who was FOSATU's education officer at the time he wrote the following in 1985, have the final word on the matter. In an article dealing with liberation politics which stressed the need for unity between different forms of organisation striving for liberation, he also addressed the vital need for economic transformation in South Africa 'that will secure the interests of the working class and rural population'.

(10) In addressing the problem of transformation he made a statement revealing the political significance of the activities of the independent unions in the 1970s.

It may well be significant that one area where some discussion and some public articulation of the problem [of transformation] has emerged is in the independent shop-floor based unions. Their close link with workers must make them aware of problems and their experience of the workings of the economy also make them far more cognizant of economic issues. However, it is the particular form of unionism that they have evolved that has raised the issue more clearly. This unionism is based on shop-floor organisation and democratic participation of worker representatives in control of the union and in negotiation. Worker representatives - shop stewards - are, therefore held closely accountable whilst playing very active roles in negotiations and within their union structures. This generates effective and militant unionism but it also addresses the problems of transformation since it establishes democratic organisation within the productive process itself.

(11)

## Appendix A

### Research Methods Used in Thesis

#### Use of Multiple Research Methods

A number of different methods was used to collect data for the thesis. The four principal methods were: (i) observation, (ii) interviews, (iii) analysis of source material, and (iv) circling back. (1) The first three methods were further subdivided into the following techniques: participant and nonparticipant observation, structured and unstructured interviews along with discussions, and analysis of both primary and secondary source material. As a further step to try and verify the findings and clarify some of the issues, a circling back method was used: the unions, as well as individuals formerly involved in the unions, were asked to comment on earlier drafts of sections of the thesis pertaining to them.

A description of all the research methods employed in this thesis is discussed below. In each of the methods the problems and pitfalls encountered in analysing and interpreting the evidence is discussed. An indication is also given of how I tried to overcome these problems.

#### Participant Observation

I conducted my participant observation for four years from 1973 to 1977 while I was closely involved with the Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau (WPWAB) as one of the founder members of the Workers' Advisory Project (WAP) and chairman of the Board of Trustees of WPWAB. In these positions I was involved in planning and strategising in WPWAB as well as in the direct training of African workers. This involvement also put

me in touch with similar activities elsewhere in the country, particularly the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) and the Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council (TUACC) in Durban and the Industrial Aid Society (IAS) in Johannesburg.

One of my last acts as a representative of WPWAB was to attend the first meeting of independent trade unions on 23rd March 1977 in Shakespeare House, Johannesburg, to discuss the formation of a federation that became FOSATU two years later. These experiences, although they were not gained for research purposes at the time, provided me with insight into the operation of the independent trade unions in their formative days. They were of great value in helping me interpret my research material and presenting an account of the unions' struggles and historical development.

However the methodological problem of subjectivity existed as a result of my involvement in WPWAB. The danger existed of wanting to rely too heavily on my own interpretation of the events and activities I was directly involved in during these years. I also found that I tended to have a selective recall of the events. To try and correct for these potential biases in my research I made a point of placing due weight on other accounts, both oral and written, of the same events. But at the same time I had to bear in mind that the other accounts were also subjective and potentially biased. In cases where I knew the subjective interests of the source, I could make allowance more easily than when I was unsure who was responsible for the information as was often the case with documentary evidence. The problems of reliability and bias are discussed in more detail under the appropriate headings below.

### Structured Interviews

One of the first ways I tended to approach unions, especially the ones with which I had no or very little prior contact, was to conduct a structured interview with the general secretary of the union. A questionnaire was used to guide the interview. (See Appendix B) The questionnaire was comprehensive and aimed at providing a general overview of the union as well as to point to the most relevant aspects of the union to concentrate the research on subsequently. It included questions on the union's structure, membership, organisational method, recognition from management, finances, industrial disputes, as well as other topics. The average time of an interview ranged from two to three hours although the first one lasted over five hours. Some of the secretaries had to be interviewed more than once as they could not afford to give that much of their time uninterruptedly.

A disadvantage of the questionnaire was that it was drawn up to try and cover all the unions to be interviewed. The questions were therefore framed at a general level to try and apply to all the unions. The result was that certain aspects specific to the different unions could not be captured from the prescribed questions. At times it was therefore necessary to diverge from the questionnaire in order to probe those aspects of the union.

In the case of a few of the smaller unions, the interview with the union's general secretary was the only personal contact I had with the particular unions. This was mostly the case with some of the unions of the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions (CCOBTU) and was in part due to the fact that I was not granted any additional access by the unions. I was thus not in a position to verify the facts and impressions the unions' secretaries conveyed to me except for primary and secondary

source material I could lay my hands. In the case of CCOBTU I obtained considerable material and assistance from one of the former officials of the Urban Training Project (UTP), Mr L. Douwes Dekker, as well as from the UTP itself.

#### Nonparticipant Observation

Further access to the unions was provided by observation of union meetings. These meetings ranged from Annual General Meetings (AGMs) to general factory meetings, to shop steward meetings, to branch and regional executive meetings. The FOSATU unions, especially those in Natal, were very facilitative, as were the ones in Transvaal and the General Workers' Union (GWU). My approach was to remain uninvolved in the meetings' proceedings other than to record events. Except in the case of very large meetings, my presence was explained to those present if they did not know beforehand why I was attending.

Such nonparticipant observation afforded me the opportunity to perceive at first hand what decisions were being taken at various levels and the way in which decisions were being reached. The observations were particularly useful in evaluating the extent of democracy and worker participation exercised in the unions.

The major problem with this method arose when the meetings were being conducted entirely in an African language, mostly Zulu or Xhosa, neither of which I could understand. (Even on the Witwatersrand the African language most commonly used at meetings was Zulu.) In such cases it was necessary to have an interpreter who was usually requested to act as such by the organiser or the chairperson of the shop stewards committee. Many of the meetings were however automatically translated

because of the presence of a non-African organiser at the meeting, or Indian workers who could not speak Zulu, or Coloured workers who could not speak Xhosa. Although this made it easier to follow the broad gist of the proceedings, a considerable amount of the finer points and nuances were lost by my not understanding the African workers directly.

### Unstructured Interviews and Discussions

Interviews were conducted with individuals who had either played an important historical role in the unions or who were significant in the unions at the time the research was conducted. Often these two attributes overlapped as the most significant persons usually had extensive trade union experience. The interviews were usually 'tailor-made' for the interviewee in order to try and draw the maximum amount of relevant information from the person. A list of issues to be covered with the person was drawn up beforehand with some questions being phrased in order to ensure that the most pertinent information was extracted and that the questions were not leading questions. Most of the 'tailor-made' interviews were recorded because of their important role in the research. Some of the really key ones were transcribed in full afterwards.

The greatest value of these interviews was in the reconstruction of the unions' histories, in examining their policies, and in probing controversial and sensitive issues. They allowed for topics to be followed up in-depth until the topic had been probed sufficiently.

The unstructured interviews with people who had been in the independent trade union movement for all or most of its existence, amounted to obtaining oral histories from them on certain unions. The precautions that had to be taken in using

the evidence of the interviews were similar to the ones historians encounter in general, namely 'to look for internal consistency, to seek confirmation in other sources, and to be aware of potential bias'. (2) In the end, says Paul Thompson,

there are no absolute rules to indicate the reliability of oral evidence, any more than that of other historical sources. The basic tests of reliability... - searching for internal consistency, cross-checking details from other sources, weighing evidence against a wider context - are just the same as other sources. (3)

The interviews I conducted proved no exception: the interviewees could not always recall dates and details of certain occasions, or would simply get them confused. However the more serious problem arose in assessing the reliability and bias of the interviewee's information, especially on sensitive and controversial issues. Account had to be taken of the posts and positions held by the persons at the time and which aspects or sides they would seek to promote and which to play down. It was clear that a person inevitably only had limited knowledge of all the events and that there were certain activities which the person did not even know about or could at best speculate what happened there. Furthermore, a person's recount of events was selective and aspects which emphasized that person's role were recalled better than others.

Hence the evidence from interviews had to be used cautiously by checking them against other verbal and written accounts of the same events. The plausibility of the person's contentions were weighed up in the light of subsequent events as well as other evidence on the same events. Allowance was also made for the person's own preferences when deciding what weight to attribute to the person's point of view on issues about which divergent views existed.

Discussions were entirely unstructured and took place during

informal encounters such as travelling to or from a meeting, socialising after work, and so on. Some most valuable snippets of information were passed on during such informal exchanges in that people were usually more relaxed on such occasions and were not necessarily concerned about the implications of what they were saying or impressions they were creating. Such discussions also created the opportunities for them to raise issues they were really concerned about or considered to be very important.

Valuable information gleaned from discussions was usually recorded in the evening of the same day when the research material obtained during that day was reviewed and filed, but some times a few days elapsed before they were written down. Care was however taken not to make use of confidential or compromising information passed on to me on such occasions. Information actually used from discussions was selected carefully precisely because the informants were relaxed and not necessarily making accurate statements, but generalising or expressing their frustration or irritation on some or other issue. An attempt was made to sift out such information and use what appeared to be reliable information.

The limitations of observation and interview research methods were to some extent overcome by the use of primary and secondary source material.

#### Primary Source Material

Primary source material consisted of minutes of all levels of meetings held by unions and coordinating bodies, memoranda and reports drawn up by the unions, correspondence, financial reports, annual reports, founding and replying affidavits legal

suits, and records of court proceedings and judgements. The references to the chapters on the unions provide a detailed account of primary source material used in the thesis. The FOSATU unions and the WPGWU allowed me access to virtually all their files with the most extensive set of files being available at FOSATU in Natal. In the case of the CCOBTU unions primary source material on some of the unions was kindly made available to me by Loet Douwes Dekker from his personal collection.

Primary source material was particularly useful for confirming dates and the exact chronology of events, the key participants at certain meetings, the names of office bearers and officials, as well as the formal decisions taken at meetings. Memoranda, reports, correspondence, affidavits and court records were very valuable for detailed accounts of events or disputes the unions entered into, as were the newspaper reports.

The primary material also had their limitations: while some secretaries made it their task to present virtual verbatim reports of meetings, others made their minutes exercises in concealment. The latter was more common and to a great extent it was the result of operating under a repressive political system. The unions' records were also incomplete and minutes of earlier meetings had often been lost, destroyed or mislaid. As a result there were occasionally gaps over large periods, usually the early ones, in the records of certain unions.

But primary source material, like interviews, were not free from bias, especially where conflict existed within the unions or institutions. In cases where committees or meetings polarised, the minutes usually reflected the side the recorder was on better than the case of the other side. Reports and memoranda also reflected similar bias or the position of certain groupings within the unions. In cases where the author of the documents

was not stated, it was considerably harder to know how to interpret the information and conclusions especially when the opposing groups and their counter-arguments were not known. In such cases other evidence of the events were relied on to supplement the account of the events.

The most difficult primary material of all to deal with was when the information was misleading or the authorship was clearly not who it purported to be. In their early days, when the unions were struggling for their survival, there was a tendency for them to exaggerate their achievements, presumably as a way of boosting workers' confidence and morale in their organisations. Early claims by unions of membership figures or factories organised therefore had to be interpreted carefully.

In a situation where many of the organisers and officials of working class origin were barely literate in English, if at all, reports were often drafted by the intellectuals. When this appeared to carry the approval of the officials concerned, the documents did not present much of a problem as reliable source material, but on the few occasions where reports were found not to reflect the actual position of the official who purportedly drew up the report as became apparent from subsequent events, the reliability of the documents had to be seriously questioned and corrected by other accounts of the events.

#### Secondary Source Material

The use of secondary source material depended to some extent on the availability of the material. A considerable amount of material was available on the independent unions in Natal starting with the IIE book on the 1973 Durban strikes and keeping up a fairly continuous stream of articles in the South African

Labour Bulletin. This was probably due to the fact that the Bulletin was initially the journal of the IIE and was produced in Durban up to early in 1983. Some useful dissertations of honours students in Industrial Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand could be drawn on as well. Although newspapers and the weekly Financial Mail were used, they were not the crucial sources of information because of their lack of material on the issues examined in this thesis. On certain aspects, such as strikes they were nonetheless very useful and the SALDRU newspaper clippings of the major newspapers in the country were a valuable source of information since all the initial search and collation of material had already been performed. Unfortunately the service only commenced in 1975 and thus made it considerably harder to obtain newspaper material on earlier periods.

Secondary source material all had the disadvantage that the selection and interpretation of their information had already been filtered through the perspective of their authors. This was taken account of when drawing on the material. Newspaper reports of industrial conflicts were also usually very superficial and often failed to get to the reasons for the disputes. Other methods therefore had to be relied on to understand the causes of the disputes.

The above methods were used in drawing up the first draft of the empirical section of the thesis. However, in order to try and ensure that the presentation of facts was accurate and the interpretation of events reliable, one more research technique was used.

## Circling Back

The first draft of the thesis on the various unions and groupings were submitted to them as well as individuals who were involved in earlier periods of the unions' history for their scrutiny. In the case of the unions and federations this was followed up by seminars with them in the different centres. The purpose of the seminars was to obtain direct feedback from the organisations on the reliability of the interpretations, especially the criticisms aimed at the organisations.

Such an exercise proved to be most fruitful as a research method since it rapidly became apparent which interpretations and criticisms could be sustained and which could not stand up to closer scrutiny. In addition certain 'grey areas' where insufficient material was available to present clear or accurate descriptions of events were also pinpointed by the unions who were often in a position to provide the missing information to clarify points or issues.

However showing research to people being researched, is not without its problems and hazards. The primary problem is that the research findings of the unions as they were in the 1970s are still of immense importance to the unions at the present time. The unions were thus consciously or unconsciously trying to present themselves in as favourable a light as possible given their existing political positions and policies. This is very understandable given the potential importance that criticisms could have on the public image of the unions. The events in the 1970s are recent enough to influence outsiders' impressions of the unions in the 1980s. As a result the criticisms in the thesis of the organisations were closely scrutinised and major efforts were expended in some cases by unionists in attempting to put the unions in a different light.

Although the feedback from the unions and formerly involved individuals provided valuable new information, the feedback had to be treated cautiously in the light of the existing evidence previously collected by means of all the other research methods. At times the verbal information presented at the seminars or subsequent discussions were in contradiction with earlier interviews granted by the same people. Only new information that was compatible with earlier evidence could be incorporated into the text. This did often lead to new or modified interpretations. New oral evidence incompatible with existing evidence supported from more than one source usually had to be rejected. Otherwise, when the evidence was not conclusive one way or another, attempts to provide final interpretations of certain events had to be abandoned due to the conflicting evidence.

After the first drafts had been amended in the light of the first circling of the findings to the union groupings, second amended drafts were again sent out. On this occasion unions either did not bother to respond or selected intellectuals in the union groupings were approached for their responses. Usually only relatively minor points were raised on the second drafts, suggesting that the second drafts were deemed to be historically more reliable and accurate. There were however a couple of unions that responded with strong criticisms of the second drafts.

A bias that was built into the circling back method was that it tended to be only the unions' intellectuals or top organisers who read the first draft of thesis chapters. The second draft was almost exclusively read by university-trained intellectuals. Their particular perspectives on the events were thus the only

ones I could obtain from this method. Although attempts were again made to ensure that a balance was maintained with other evidence, the method did afford intellectuals the opportunity to put matters pertaining to them in a more favourable perspective.

The combination of techniques outlined above most probably provide a reliable account of the unions' histories during the 1970s. The account and analysis are however not value-free as they were viewed from a particular perspective that supports the broad aims of the independent trade union movement. Strenuous efforts were however made to present a reliable rendition of the unions' experiences in the 1970s. Other people may well be able to draw different conclusions from the experiences.

A F R I C A N   T R A D E   U N I O N   R E S E A R C HQUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNION SECRETARIESC O N T E N T S

<u>Document</u>	<u>Page(s)</u>
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Personal Profile	1-2
Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions	2-4
Union Structure	4-6
Union Members	6-8
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A F R I C A N T R A D E U N I O N R E S E A R C H

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNION SECRETARIES

UNION: \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR FOUNDED: \_\_\_\_\_

How can I obtain a brief *history* of your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are the goals of your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PERSONAL PROFILE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Income: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Language: \_\_\_\_\_

When did you become Union Secretary? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you become Union Secretary? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What previous union experience do you have?

Date                      Union/Organization                      Experience

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are your tasks as Union Secretary? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How often, on average, do you go to a factory/company:

(a) to see Union Members? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) to attend factory meetings? \_\_\_\_\_

When was the last time you attended a factory meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

WIEHAHN AND RIEKERT COMMISSIONS

Does your Union intend to apply for provisional registration? \_\_\_\_\_

Why (not)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the Wiehahn Commission and subsequent legislation likely to:

(a) influence job reservation experienced by your Union Members? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(b) change access to apprenticeship by your Union Members? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(c) ../3...

(c) affect your Union's legal rights in any way?  
 (Industrial Court, unfair labour practices) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(d) strengthen or weaken your Union in any way?  
 (Registration conditions, migrant workers and frontier commuters,  
 Industrial Council veto, works councils)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Has management's response to your Union changed since the Wiehahn  
 Commission Report? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain How: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have relationships between you and registered trade unions changed since  
 the Wiehahn Commission Report? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you expect the recommendations of the Riekert Commission to influence your Union in any way? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

UNION STRUCTURE

Does your Union have an executive committee/branch executive committee (BEC)? \_\_\_\_\_

How is it elected/appointed? (Procedure, composition, term of office) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How often does the executive committee/BEC meet? \_\_\_\_\_

What does the executive committee/BEC do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are the tasks of the executive committee/BEC members? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many organizers does your Union have? \_\_\_\_\_

/5...

What is the average income of an organizer? \_\_\_\_\_

How were they appointed/elected? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any non-African organizers? \_\_\_\_\_

Why (not)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think Whites, Coloureds, or Indians have a role to play in African trade unions? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are the tasks of the organizers? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How often, on average, does an organizer go to a company/factory:

(a) to see Union Members? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) to attend factory meetings? \_\_\_\_\_

How many shop stewards/shop stewards' committees does your Union have? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 6 -

In which companies/factories/plants are the shop stewards' committees?

(If too many, where are largest and most important ones) \_\_\_\_\_

How are shop stewards elected/appointed?

(Procedure, composition, term of office) \_\_\_\_\_

How often do shop steward committees meet? \_\_\_\_\_

What do the shop stewards' committees do? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the tasks of the shop stewards? \_\_\_\_\_

UNION MEMBERS

How many members does your Union have? \_\_\_\_\_

/7...

- 7 -

How many are paid-up members? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the predominant language groups amongst your members? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your Union open to all race groups? \_\_\_\_\_

Why (not)? \_\_\_\_\_

Does it have any non-African members? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

What number/proportion of your Union members are:

permanent residents \_\_\_\_\_

frontier commuters \_\_\_\_\_

migrant workers \_\_\_\_\_

Are there differences between migrant workers and permanent residents with regard to:

(1) readiness to belong to a union \_\_\_\_\_

(2) payment of union dues \_\_\_\_\_

(3) attendance of union meetings \_\_\_\_\_

(4) willingness to serve as an office bearer \_\_\_\_\_

How many organizers ( ), executive members ( ), shop stewards ( ), are migrant workers?

/8...



- 9 -

How often does your Union hold company/factory meetings? \_\_\_\_\_

What porportion of company/factory members attend them? \_\_\_\_\_

How many companies/factories are:

well organized? \_\_\_\_\_

reasonably organized? \_\_\_\_\_

poorly organized? \_\_\_\_\_

Which companies/factories are well organized? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you choose which factories to organize? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the Union recruit new members? \_\_\_\_\_

How does the Union set about organizing a new factory? \_\_\_\_\_

At what stage do you approach management? \_\_\_\_\_

/10...

- 10 -

TRAINING AND PUBLICATIONS

What training do Union office bearers receive?

(Frequency, duration, contents, type of training)

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What training do Union members receive? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who runs the training course? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the purpose of your Union's training course(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Have Union office bearers or members been sent overseas for training? \_\_\_\_\_

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What material does your Union publish? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are the publications for? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the aims of the publications? \_\_\_\_\_

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DISMISSALS AND DISCIPLINE

Can Union office bearers be dismissed from their posts by members? \_\_\_\_\_

On what grounds and how? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have any office bearers ever been dismissed by members? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify (when, why, how): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have any office bearers even been dismissed without the participation of members? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify (when, why, how): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have members been dismissed from the Union? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify (when, how, why): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have workers been refused membership to the Union? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify (when, how, why): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 12 -

Is there a right to appeal against dismissals? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain the procedure: \_\_\_\_\_

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Can your Union discipline members and/or office bearers? \_\_\_\_\_

On what grounds and how? \_\_\_\_\_

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Have any members and/or office bearers been disciplined? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain (when, why, how): \_\_\_\_\_

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Is there a right to appeal against disciplinary measures? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain the procedure: \_\_\_\_\_

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Does your Union have a dismissal and/or disciplinary code? \_\_\_\_\_

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- 13 -

WORKER GRIEVANCES

How does the Union get to know that an individual worker has a grievance? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are the most common grievances of individual workers? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does the Union usually handle an individual worker's grievance? \_\_\_\_\_

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What success rate does the Union have with individual grievances? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does your Union know that a group of workers has a collective grievance? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are the most common collective grievances? \_\_\_\_\_

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How does the Union usually handle a collective grievance? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What success rate does the Union have with collective grievances? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think Union members are satisfied with your Union's performance in handling grievances? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What use does your Union make of legal services? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES

Do workers sometimes take matters into their own hands when they have an unresolved grievance? \_\_\_\_\_

Give examples: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have there been short spontaneous shows of resistance (such as lightning strikes) by workers in companies/factories where you have members? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify (when, why, what, for how long): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



What effect did the disputes have on Union membership and strength? \_\_\_\_\_

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PROBLEMS OF ORGANIZATION

Who or what are the major obstacles your Union faces in organizing workers?

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How has the economic climate since 1976 influenced your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are your Union's experiences with works committees, liaison committees and in-plant committees set up by management? \_\_\_\_\_

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- 17 -

Have ethnic difference ever caused divisions in your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What role does the Department of Labour play towards your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does Inkatha have any effect on your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does your Union have any policy towards Inkatha? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### MACHINERY AND SKILLS

Has the introduction of new machinery:

(a) changed the number of Union members? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(b) changed the type of work they do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

/18...

(c) changed the level of skill required from members? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(d) changed the responsibility at work of members? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(e) made them more/less/equally replaceable by other workers? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does the kind of work your Union members do influence the Union's strength in any way? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

UNION RECOGNITION AND NEGOTIATION

Has your Union gained recognition from employers/employers' associations?

SPECIFY:

Employers/Associations

Form of Recognition

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do your Union organizers have access onto company/factory premises? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify (how many, nature of access): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 19 -

Is your Union allowed to put notices up on the company/factory premises? \_\_\_\_\_

Are shop stewards allowed to tend to Union tasks during working hours? \_\_\_\_\_

Are they paid during those hours? \_\_\_\_\_

With how many companies does your Union negotiate directly with management over wages and working conditions? \_\_\_\_\_

Which companies do you negotiate with? \_\_\_\_\_

With which of them do you have formal (signed) agreements? \_\_\_\_\_

#### INDUSTRIAL COUNCILS

Is your Union represented in any way at Industrial Council negotiations? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain how and which one: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your Union have any other dealings with the Industrial Council? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the Industrial Council perform any services for your Union? \_\_\_\_\_

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are your Union members' interests adequately represented on the Industrial Council? \_\_\_\_\_

Why (not)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

UNION BENEFITS AND SOURCES OF REVENUE

What benefits does your Union provide for its members and how much do members contribute to each benefit?

<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Contribution</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

How are dues collected from workers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is there a joining fee? \_\_\_\_\_ How much? \_\_\_\_\_

- 21 -

How much are weekly dues and what are they for? \_\_\_\_\_

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How much does the Union raise from weekly dues? \_\_\_\_\_

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What other sources of revenue does the Union have and how much does it receive from them?

<u>Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>
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Are all the Union expenses (salaries, rent, transport, etc.) borne by the Union? \_\_\_\_\_

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If not, who bears these costs? \_\_\_\_\_

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Are Union accounts audited each year? \_\_\_\_\_

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REGISTERED UNIONS AND FEDERATIONS

What links does your Union have with a registered union(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you have these links? \_\_\_\_\_

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What co-ordinated group and/or federation(s) does your Union belong to in South Africa? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why do you belong to it/them? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why did you /did you not join FOSATU? \_\_\_\_\_

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What ties does your Union have with international labour federations? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Footnotes

## Part 1. Theory and Background

1. See Maree, 1980:13-30, for an account of the origins and organisation of the UAW in Port Elizabeth.
2. For information on the origins of BAWU see Nolutshungu, 1983:188-90; and Khoapa, 1973:120-4. For the transformation of BAWU into SAAWU and its subsequent expansion in East London, see Maree, 1982.
3. Webster, 1979; Graaff and Maree, 1977.
4. Bittner, 1973:264.
5. Donaldson, 1985:7.
6. Salaman, 1979:5.

## Chapter 1. Theories of Trade Unions

1. Poole, 1981.
2. See Engels, 1977:35-6; Marx, 1977:48; and Hyman, 1971:4-8.
3. Lozovsky, 1972:50.
4. Marx, 1977:55; also see Hyman, 1971:10.
5. Lozovsky, 1972:51.
6. Ibid.:51.
7. Hyman, 1971:12, footnote 30.
8. Lenin, 1977:64, 67.
9. Ibid.:64 and 68.
10. Ibid.:71-74. Also see Hyman, 1971:11-14.
11. Hyman, 1971:41.
12. Anderson, 1977:334.
13. Ibid.:334.
14. Ibid.:334.
15. Ibid.:335.
16. Ibid.:336.
17. Ibid.:336-7.
18. Ibid.:338.
19. Ibid.:338.
20. Ibid.:340-1.
21. Ibid.:342.
22. Ibid.:344.
23. Ibid.:336.
24. Hyman, 1971:18.
25. Quoted by Hyman, 1971:25.
26. Ibid.:26.
27. Hyman, 1975:158; Clegg, 1979:24.
28. Hyman, 1975:35
29. Ibid.:37.
30. Ibid.:37-38
31. Ibid.:46.
32. Ibid.:47.
33. Ibid.:49.
34. Ibid.:52.
35. Ibid.:52
36. Cohen, 1981:145.
37. Ibid.:147-8.
38. Lambert, 1985:245,251.
39. Ibid.:247.

40. Ibid.:249.
41. Ibid.:250-51.
42. See Poole, 1981:60-67, for the influence of Durkheim, Dunlop and the Webbs on the liberal pluralists; also see Flanders, 1970:246-76, for a direct application of Durkheimian theory by Flanders and Fox.
43. Flanders, 1970:247.
44. Ibid.:248, 267.
45. Flanders 1970:86.
46. Fox, 1969:397.
47. Ibid.:397-8.
48. Ibid.:399.
49. Flanders, 1972:20.
50. Flanders, 1972:21.
51. Ibid.:22.
52. Flanders, 1969:408.
53. Flanders quoted by Fox, 1975:313.
54. Fox, 1977:136.
55. Fox, 1975:308-9.
56. Ibid.:309.
57. Fox, 1977:142.
58. Fox, 1975: 313.
59. Hyman, 1975:69.
60. Hyman and Fryer, 1975:161.
61. Hyman, 1975:87,88.
62. Ibid.:90-91.
63. Gramsci, 1969:15.
64. Webb, 1920:1.
65. Hyman and Fryer, 1975:160.
66. Mills, 1971:7.
67. Flanders, 1972:20.
68. All the quotes on the labour movement are from G.D.H. Cole, 1948:3-7.
69. Flanders, 1972:22-24.
70. Hyman, 1975:76.
71. Ibid.:76.
72. Allen 1954:15. He subsequently disavowed this viewpoint. See Hyman 75:83.
73. H.A.Turner, 1962, Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy, quoted in Hyman, 1975:82.
74. S.M.Lipset, M.Trow and J.Coleman, 1972:155.
75. Ibid.:169.
76. Lipset et al quoted by Martin, 1972:190.
77. Edelstein and Warner, 1979:61-2.
78. Ibid.:62.
79. Ibid.:341.
80. Ibid.:340.
81. Clegg, 1979:208.
82. Ibid.:209.
83. Martin, 1972:191.
84. Ibid.:193.
85. See Maree, 1976, for a study of a very undemocratic union where exactly such an opposition did exist.
86. Clegg, 1979:166-171.
87. Michels, 1959.
88. Ibid.:vii.
89. Ibid.:21-2.
90. Ibid.:32.
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3. Minutes of TUACC Secretariat, 16 June 1975.
4. Mawbey, 1978.
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7. Interview: Mawbey, 1979.
8. Mawbey, 1978.
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10. CWIU, 1984:5.
11. All the information on NCS Plastics drawn from Mawbey 1979.
12. Discussion union lawyer, 16 Oct 1979.
13. Financial Mail, 19 Oct 1979.
14. Workshop: Erwin, Mawbey, Crompton, 1983.
15. Discussion: Rod Crompton, 21 Nov 1979.
16. CWIU, 1984:14.
17. CWIU, The CWIU at Henkel (S.A.) Durban Report 1, 21 Sept 1978.
18. CWIU, Henkel South Africa (Pty) Ltd, 1978.
19. Report 1, op cit.
20. CWIU, Progress Report on Campaign for Recognition at Henkel SA (Pty) Prospecton for Period between 6 December 1978 and 4 April 1979.
21. CWIU, Campaign for Union Recognition at Henkel SA (Pty) Ltd for Period 4 April to 23 May 1979 Report No 5.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. CWIU, Progress Report on Union Recognition at Henkel -

## Report No 6.

26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
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29. Letter to N. Dlamini from C. Abrams, Technical Director, 14 Nov 1979.
30. Questionnaire Interview: Dlamini, 1979.
31. CWIU, 1984:15.
32. Questionnaire Interview: Dlamini, 1979.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Discussion: Rod Crompton, 20 Nov 1979.
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2. Interview: Cheadle, 1979.
3. Minutes, Executive Committee meeting of GFWBF, 15 Sept 1973.
4. Minutes, Executive Committee meeting of GFWBF, 17 Feb 1973.
5. Minutes, Executive Committee meeting of GFWBF, 8 Dec 1973.
6. Document: Dave Hemson, 29 Aug 1972.
7. Minutes, Executive Committee meeting of GFWBF, 18 Aug and 15 Sept 1973; GFWBF Report to TUACC, June 1974.
8. Minutes, Executive Committee meeting of GFWBF, 8 Dec 1973.
9. Minutes, Executive Committee meeting of GFWBF, 24 May 1974.
10. GFWBF Report to TUACC Council, 6 Apr 1975.
11. Document: Transformation of the GFWBF into the TGWU, undated.
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13. Minutes, Executive Committee meeting of GFWBF, 20 March 75; GFWBF Report to TUACC Council, 6 Apr 1975.
14. Document: Transformation... op cit; History of the TGWU, M.Murphy, July 1975.
15. Workshop: Erwin, Mawbey, Crompton, 1983.
16. Minutes, First Shop Stewards Council Meeting, 20 July 1975.
17. Report to TUACC of the TGWU, Aug 75.
18. Affidavit: Isabella Shongwe, 14 July 1977.
19. TGWU Report to TUACC by M.Murphy, Acting Secretary, Aug 1975.
20. Financial Statement for General Sector for Month of August 1975.
21. Affidavit: A Erwin, 19 Jan 1978.
22. Ibid.
23. Interview: Dlamini, 1979.
24. Interview: Erwin, 1979.
25. Interview: Nala, 1979.
26. Affidavits: Isabella Shongwe, 14 July 1977 and 19 Jan 1978.
27. Document: 'The Following is the Sequence of Event Leading up to the Present Situation', undated.
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32. Ibid.
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35. Affidavit: I.Shongwe, 12 July 77 and 15 Oct 77, D.Khumalo, 17 Aug 1977.
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45. Ibid.
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51. Affidavit: I.Shongwe, 19 Jan 1978.
52. Interview: Khumalo, 1979.
53. Workshop: Erwin, Mawbey, Crompton, 1983.
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56. Min. Liaison Committee, 4 July 1978; Evidence in Magistrate Court Case, The State versus M I Sisoka and Others, 30 Jan 1979, transcript:29-30.
57. Affidavit: D.C. Cohen, 7 Nov 1978; Min. Liaison Committee, 11 July 1978.
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59. Letter to Mr C Crespi, Forbo Betriebs A G, Zurich, from Forbo-Krommenie (Pty) Ltd, 12 Sept 1978, signed by D C Cohen.
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61. Affidavit: D.C. Cohen op cit; TGWU Report on Forbo-Krommenie Part 2.
62. Letter to C Crespi from I Shongwe, 27 Sept 1978.
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64. TGWU Report on Forbo-Krommenie Part 3.
65. The account of this incident and subsequent lock-out is compiled from Joshi 1979; Affidavits: D.C. Cohen op cit, Israel Sisoka 30 Oct 1978 and 16 Nov 1978, Philip Hlope, 16 Nov 1978.
66. Affidavit: D.C. Cohen, 7 Nov 1978.
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70. Ibid.:89.
71. Notice of Motion In the Supreme Court of SA Durban and Coast Local Division Case No M 1108/78, 31 Oct 1978.
72. Affidavit: D.C. Cohen, op cit.
73. TGWU Forbo-Krommenie Report No 6.
74. Notes taken at Shop Stewards Meeting, 22 Oct 1979.
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76. TGWU Forbo-Krommenie Report No.6.
77. TGWU Forbo-Krommenie Report No.7.
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  34. Minutes, TUACC Secretariat meetings, 6 Jan 1974 - 12 Apr 1976.
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  36. Minutes, TUACC Secretariat meetings, 23 and 24 Feb 1976.
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  46. Minutes of Inaugural Meeting of IIE, 30 May 1973.
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  49. Minutes of Working Committee, 29 Aug, 23 Oct and 6 Nov 1973.
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  53. Interview: Fisher, 1979.
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  64. Minutes of Working Committee, 9 Sept, 28 and 31 Oct 1975, 2 Feb 1976.
  65. Minutes of Working Committee, 9 July 1974 and 3 June 1975, and IIE Council, 27 July 1974.
  66. Minutes of Working Committee, 3 Aug 1975, and IIE Council, 10 Aug and 6 Dec 1975.
  67. Minutes of Working Committee, 5 and 20 Jan and 29 Feb 1976.
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  100. Discussions with organisers.
  101. SAIRR 1979:325.
  102. Interview: Erwin, 1979.

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3. E.Tyacke, Interview conducted by Roddy Nunes, 23 March 1984.
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5. Tyacke, Interview by Nunes, 1984.
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9. Interview: Douwes Dekker, 1979.
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11. Khoapa, 1973:8-10.
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14. Tyacke, Written Comments to Author, 27 Sept. 1985; and Interview: Douwes Dekker, 1979.
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32. UTP AR 1975:1.
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48. Chipeya, Memorandum to Author, 1983.
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50. UTP AR 1977:32,44.
51. Interview: Douwes Dekker, 1979.

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11. Ibid.:p.207.
12. All the above case studies on recognition were drawn from Douwes Dekker, 1981:213-14, 216-18.
13. Hlongwane, 1976:54.
14. Douwes Dekker, 1981:219.
15. Interview: Hlongwane, 1979.
16. Telephone Consultation, Hlongwane, 21 Jan. 1983.

17. Interview: Nkabinda, 1979.
18. Affidavit: Mqhayi, 26 April, 1979.
19. Interview: Nkabinde, 1979.
20. Affidavit: Mqhayi, 1 August, 1979.
21. Ibid.
22. Interview: Nkabinde, 1979.
23. Interview: Hlongwane, 1979; Telephone Consultation, 1983.
24. Interview: Nkabinde, 1979.
25. Interview: Bapela, 1979.
26. Minutes of the AGM of the Central Branch of EAWU, 3 June 1978.
27. Affidavit: Mqhayi, 1 August 1979, paragraph 10.6.2.
28. Interview: Bapela, 1979; Affidavit: Mqhayi, 26 April 1979.
29. Affidavit: Mqhayi, 26 April 1979.
30. J.Hlongwane, Note to Author, July 1983.
31. Interview: Bapela, 1979.
32. All the information in this section is based on a questionnaire interview with Jane Hlongwane, August 1979, unless otherwise stated.
33. Interview: Bapela, 1979.
34. Douwes Dekker, 1981:191.
35. UTP AR 1973:3.
36. Clement Monthso, Note to Author, July 1983.
37. Douwes Dekker, 1981:193.
38. Ibid:191,195.
39. Montsho, Note to Author, 1983.
40. Interview: Montsho, 1979.
41. Douwes Dekker, 1981:200.
42. Tyacke, Memorandum to Author, 1983.
43. Douwes Dekker, 1981:200.
44. Ibid.:201.
45. L.Douwes Dekker, Report on African Bus Service, mimeo., 5 April 1976:1; Douwes Dekker, 1981:202.
46. Douwes Dekker, 1981:201-2.
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48. Douwes Dekker, 'Report..', op. cit.:1-2.
49. Douwes Dekker, 1981:192,199,200.
50. Letter from C.Montsho to General Manager, ABS Pretoria Pty Ltd, 15 Oct. 1976.
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52. Douwes Dekker, 1981:203.
53. Ibid.:203.
54. Ibid.:204.
55. Ibid.:205.
56. TAWU, Quarterly Report, Jan.-March 1977; October-Dec.1977.
57. Interview: Montsho, 1979; Financial Mail, 25 Aug 1978.
58. Interview: Montsho, 1979.
59. Letter from C.Montsho to Operating Executive, PUTCO, 31 August 1977.
60. Interview: Manana, 1979.
61. Letter signed by W.Manana, 9 September 1977.
62. Interview: Montsho, 1979.
63. Interview: Manana, 1979.
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65. Interview: Manana, 1979.
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70. Ibid.:189.
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72. Douwes Dekker, 1981:181.
73. Ibid.:190.
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79. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979.
80. Douwes Dekker, 1981:179.
81. UTP AR 1977:39. An international campaign against Unilever was also launched, but the union failed to gain recognition.
82. All the information in this section from an interview with Skakes Sikhakhane, 10 August 1979.
83. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979; Interview: Magubane, 1979.
84. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979; Caretaker Executive Committee (CEC) pamphlet, undated.
85. Interviews: Sikhakhane, Magubane 1979; CEC pamphlet.
86. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979.
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89. Interview: Magubane, 1979.
90. Interviews: Sikhakhane, Magubane, 1979.
91. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979.
92. CEC pamphlet.
93. Interview: Magubane, 1979.
94. Workshop: Tyacke and Douwes Dekker, 1983.
95. CEC pamphlet; Interview: Magubane, 1979.
96. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979.
97. Affidavits: J.Mabaso, 9 May 1979, paragraphs 7 and 8; 11 June 1979, paragraph 5e(vii)-(viii).
98. Sunday Express, 15 July 1979; Mabaso, Affidavits, 11 June 1979, paragraph 5e(iii)-(vi); 27 July 1979, paragraph 8a.
99. Affidavit: Mr Zachariah, 27 July 1979, paragraph 6b.
100. Affidavit: Mabaso, 27 July, 1979, par. 6b.
101. Affidavit: Mabaso, 9 May 1979, par.7-9.
102. Affidavit: J.H.Nel, June 1979, par.7e.
103. Affidavit: Mabaso, 9 May 1979, par.13.
104. Affidavit: J.H.Nel, June 1979, par.10a-b.
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106. Affidavit: Mabaso, 11 June 1979, par.9a-b.
107. Interview: J.D.Nel, Johannesburg, 14 Sept. 1979.
108. Affidavit: J.D.Nel, 1 June 1979, par.6a.
109. Affidavits: Mabaso, 9 May 1979, par.20; J.H.Nel, June 1979, par.11.
110. J.D.Nel, Affidavit, 1 June 1979, par.8c
111. The Star, 27 March 1979.
112. Post, 28 March 1979.
113. Interview: J.D.Nel, 1979.
114. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979.
115. Interview: J.D.Nel, 1979.
116. Financial Mail, 15.2.80; Mabaso, Affidavit, 27 July 1979, par.3.
117. Affidavit: J.D.Nel, 4 Sept. 1979, par.7a(vii).
118. Financial Mail, 15.2.80; Affidavit: Mabaso, 27 July 1979, par.9.
119. Financial Mail, 29 Feb 1980.

120. Interview: J.D.Nel, 1979.
121. All the information in this section is drawn from a structured interview with Agnes Mapopi Molefe, Johannesburg, July 1979, unless otherwise stated.
122. Douwes Dekker, 1981:220.
123. Ibid.:221-2.
124. UTP AR 1975:9,11,12.
125. A.Molefe, Note to Author, July 1983.
126. All the information in this section is drawn from a structured interview with Dan Tau, Johannesburg, August 1979, unless otherwise stated.
127. Financial Report, Executive Committee meeting, 25 August, 1979.
128. Notes taken at Executive Committee meeting, 25 August, 1979.
129. All the information in this section is drawn from an interview with Emma Mashinini, Johannesburg, August 1979, unless otherwise stated.
130. Interview: Sikhakhane, 1979.
131. Interview: Khomani, 1979.
132. Letters to author from CCAWUSA president, 26 Sept. 1985, and general secretary, 29 Oct. 1985.
133. Douwes Dekker, 1981:223-4.
134. Ibid.:223-4.
135. Interview: Mhlanga, 1979.
136. Douwes Dekker, 1981:233.
137. Ibid.:226-8.
138. Ibid.:229.
139. Ibid.:229.
140. Supreme Court of SA (Witwatersrand Local Divison) Peter Njinge and Others vs Pilkington Brothers (SA), Agreement of Settlement, 22 Nov 1974, Case No. 2643/74.
141. Ibid.
142. Quoted in Douwes Dekker, 1981:231.
143. Letter from J.L.Nthebe to the General Manager, Pilkington Brothers, Springs, 29 March 1977.
144. Letter from General Manager, Pilkington Brothers, to the secretary GAWU, 27 May 1977.
145. GAWU, 1977:61.
146. Ibid.:62.
147. Douwes Dekker, 1981:237.
148. GAWU, 1977:62; Financial Mail, 10 September 1976.
149. Douwes Dekker, 1981:238.
150. GAWU, 1981:63.
151. Financial Mail, 24 September 1976.
152. GAWU, 1977:69.
153. Ibid.:67-8.
154. Ibid.:65.
155. Financial Mail, 7 October 1976.
156. Financial Mail, 24 Sept. 1976; GAWU, 1977:65.
157. Financial Mail, 24 Sept. 1976.
158. Ibid.
159. GAWU, 1977:64.
160. Financial Mail, 12 Nov 1976.
161. GAWU, 1977:64 and 66.
162. Ibid.:66-7.
163. All the information in this section obtained from a structured interview with both Churchill Mhlanga, president of GAWU, and Angel Makhanya, general secretary, Benoni, 30 Aug 1979, unless otherwise stated.
164. All the information in this section obtained from a structured interview with Benjie Mngoma, general secretary

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  166. PWAU pamphlet, 'Company Grants Union Facilities', June 1976.
  167. Discussion: Douwes Dekker, Johannesburg, 2 Aug 1979; UTP AR 1976:12.
  168. UTP AR 1976:12.
  169. Letter to PWAU, from Regional Personnel Manager, Bruply Board Ltd, 3 March 1977; Minutes of meeting between B.Mngoma and Personnel Manager of Bruply, 10 May 1977; Letter to General Secretary from Personnel Manager of Bruply, 20 May 1977.
  170. Rand Daily Mail, 1 Sept 1978.
  171. Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the UTP Advisory Committee, 15 Sept. 1978.
  172. Ibid.
  173. Letter to the Secretary, PWAU, from the Director, UTP, 28 Sept, 1978.
  174. Letter to the Secretary, PWAU, from the Secretary, UTP, 1 Nov. 1978.
  175. All the information in this section obtained from a structured interview with Dora Nowatha, Pretoria, August 1979.
  176. Interview: Chipeya, 1979.
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16. Interview: Bonner, 1979.
17. Interview: Anderson, 1979.
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28. Interview: Anderson, 1979.
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33. Workshop: Adler, 1983.
34. Interview: Anderson, 1979.
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37. Financial Mail, 2 Apr. 1976.
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42. Interview: Anderson, 1979.
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6. Wilson, 1972:76.

#### Ch.11. The Western Province General Workers' Union

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  17. Abasebenzi, Dec. 1974, No.8.
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  44. Dave Lewis and Di Cooper, Industrial Sociology Honours Seminar, 22 April 1982.
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  46. Interview: Lewis, 1983.
  47. Workshop: Frankish, 1986.
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  50. Interview: Lewis, 1983.
  51. Ibid.
  52. Ibid.
  53. Ibid.
  54. Workshop: Frankish, 1986.
  55. WPGWU, 1980:68.
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59. General Workers' Union, 1981:18.
60. Discussion: Cooper, 7 March 1986.
61. WPGWU, 1979:120-1.
62. Ibid.:123.
63. Ibid.:120.
64. Ibid.:129.
65. Ibid.:121.
66. Ibid.:129.
67. The following issues of the South African Labour Bulletin all contain articles pertaining to the registration debate sparked off by the WPGWU:  
5,4, November 1979; 5,6&7, March 1980; 7,1&2, Sept. 1981; 7,3, Nov. 1981; 8,1, Sept. 1982; and 8,2, Nov.1982.
68. Lewis, 1982:10-13.
69. Workshop: Frankish, 1986.
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71. Ibid.:8.
72. Report of the Secretary of the Advice Bureau as from February 1973, 1 Nov. 1973.

#### Ch12. Historical Synthesis and Union Strategies for Power

1. Interview: Cheadle, 1979.
2. Interview: Anderson, 1979.
3. UTP Annual Report 1976:13.
4. Horner, 1976b:77.
5. SAIRR, 1976:103-4.
6. See, for instance, Maree, 1976.
7. UTP Shop Steward Manual, 1976:3.

#### Ch.14 Theoretical and Empirical Conclusions

1. See Webster, 1984:12,14,16.
2. Baskin, 1982:25.
3. SALDRU, 1984. CUSA figure calculated from information about the individual unions affiliated to CUSA, FOSATU figure from section on Federations, p.15.
4. Naledi Writers Unit, 1985:25.
5. Lambert and Lambert, 1983:227; also see SALB, 1982, 8,6&7:5-28.
6. Financial Mail, 16 November 1984:31-5; Labour Monitor Group, 1985:74-100.
7. See chapter two for more details on the repression of SACTU and the reasons therefore.
8. This concept of workerism is drawn from Cronin, 1986:32.
9. Lambert, 1985:247-8.
10. Erwin, 1985:70.
11. Ibid.:68-9.

#### Appendix A. Research Methods used in Thesis

1. The categorisation of research methods for the first three methods is derived from Bailey, 1982. The fourth method, circling back my research findings to the unions, does not

correspond exactly with progressive focussing used in ethnographic research (see Open University, 1979:53), nor general feedback for the purposes of program evaluation (see Posavac and Carey, 1980:15-16), nor with the dialectical research cycle of the 'new paradigm research' (Rowan 1981:97-106). All the same, precedents of showing earlier drafts of one's research to the people one studied do exist (see, for instance, Willis, 1979:194-99).

2. Thompson, 1968:92.
3. Ibid.:134.

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## Abbreviations

- SAIRR - South African Institute of Race Relations.  
 SALB - South African Labour Bulletin.  
 SALDRU - Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit.

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#### General

In addition to the items listed above a wide range of primary source material was used. They are too varied and too many to list here, but are recorded in the footnotes.