

African Unions :strategies and problems

The potential for the organisation of african workers is probably better now than it has ever been in South Africa. There are three main reasons for this.

The first and most important reason is related to the rapid growth of the economy. There were approximately 1 million african wage workers outside agriculture in 1960. Today there are more than 2 million.

They are also doing different kinds of jobs. Many africans are doing semi-skilled operative jobs, and some are beginning to move into artisan jobs. For example, in one textile factory in Durban only 11% of the weekly-paid african workers are in the unskilled category.

All the rest require some degree of training and experience in order to reach full productivity. Because their skill is industry-specific they are likely to be more interested in gaining improvements by combining within the industry, than by shopping around from industry to industry in order to find the best wage. On the other hand, employers are more dependent on them, since dismissing a large number of workers at one time would affect production for some months.

The second reason is related to the internal political position.

There is a significant increase in pressure from within the dominant group for reforms of various sorts. Whites are beginning at last to appreciate their vulnerability. This awareness is very much influenced by the political activity of those black leaders who have best been able to use the instruments of separate development to attack separate development: particularly leaders like Buthelezi and Leon. These people have a legitimacy in the eyes of both black and white which has probably never been achieved before. It is impossible for whites to write them off as unrepresentative agitators, and very difficult for the government to act against them.

The third reason is increasing international pressure on South Africa. The coming to power of Frelimo in Mozambique is crucial here. But the pressure is also important specifically in relation to labour, particularly through instructions from UK and US governments that tier firms in SA should deal directly with african unions. Of course, very few of these firms have as yet done so, but pressure on them is likely to increase.

believe

this course. But many will not. We ~~suspect~~ that the growth of "black consciousness" among the black middle classes indicates a growing awareness of the extent to which they have ~~z~~ up till now been used as functionaries to keep the system of exploitation running. They are beginning to realise that the "western culture" to which they have been given access is nothing but a set of tools for domination. But ~~the~~ "black consciousness" ~~people do not~~ ^{does not} as yet seem to have got beyond a simple rejection. And ~~they~~ ^{it} do not seem to have made a clear analysis of the relation between conquest, discrimination and exploitation. This is why we welcome this opportunity to focus upon the problems of the workers. We believe that it is only by a careful consideration of the relation between the interests of the exploited workers and the interests of the ~~exploited~~ discriminated against functionaries that the nature of a black renaissance can emerge.

The main problem facing the workers then, is the problem of exploitation. This exploitation is based on two principles:

- 1) The continued undevelopment of the "reserves" (whether inside South Africa or outside), which ensures a continuous supply of workers to the industrial areas;
- 2) The fact that African workers do not have institutions through which they can combine and use the power of their numbers to negotiate for a fair share of the product.

This means that the workers have an interest in policies and strategies which:

- 1) Ensure rapid development of the rural areas throughout southern africa, with an increase in the employment capacity of the rural areas;
- 2) ~~The~~ Help in the growth of worker organisations through which workers can begin to assert some control over their labour.

In this paper we shall deal only with this second aspect. The rapid development of the South African economy ~~are~~ bringing about changes in the role of the African work force. African workers have always been predominant in the farming sector. But, for a number of different reasons, it is usually very ~~difficult~~^{difficult} for farm workers to organise. African workers have also always been predominant on the mines, but, because the compound system and the migrant labour system as practised on the mines make possible a very tight control over workers, ⁴ it has been equally difficult for black mine workers to organise. However

However, what is happening now is that the industrial sector of the economy is the fastest growing, and over the past 15 years African workers have also achieved predominance here. Firstly, the percentage of white workers in industry has continuously declined. Less than 25% are now white.

Secondly black workers are moving into semi-skilled operative jobs. In these jobs there skill is more important to ~~the~~ ~~the xxxxxxxxxx~~ production ~~of the~~ ~~factory~~. The result is that they have more power. Employers can dismiss a

XXXXX unskilled labourers and replace them with out any loss of production.

But it is not so easy to replace a workforce of ~~experienced~~ experienced machine operatives

The Durban strikes, and increasing worker militancy throughout South Africa, are made possible by this change. Unless there is a very serious recession in the rest of the world the South African economy will continue to grow, and with it will grow the potential power of the black workers. But this power will remain ~~only~~ potential unless it can find organisational form. This is where trade unions come in.

Trade unions will not grow of their own accord. There are three main obstacles in the way of trade unions.

The first obstacle is the state. It is ^{for African workers} legal to form trade unions, but nevertheless the government does not like them. There is no legislation which protects workers organisations adequately against employers. Most African trade unions suffer a lot from security branch harassment, and a number of trade unionists have been banned. However, the state is also subject to a lot of external pressure to recognise, or at least not to ban, trade unions. Also, at least some people seem to be beginning to realise that trade unions must come.

The second obstacle is the employers. The employers have long benefitted from high profit rates and from total control over their black workers. Very few employers are willing to recognise unions unless they are forced to do so by the organised power of the workers. Meanwhile they use every trick they can. They victimise active workers, even when such workers are on legally recognised works committees. They cooperate with the department of labour and with the police in trying to harass unionists. And they spread lies to the workers about trade unions.

The third obstacle is bad leadership and bad strategy. The most obvious danger here is corruption, and many unions in South Africa and elsewhere have suffered from corruption. But there are more insidious dangers. It is very easy for a trade union to become a complaints office, to which workers come with individual complaints. Then the office solves these complaints for the workers. In this way the union becomes something separate from the workers themselves. Even if the workers pay subscriptions, they remain essentially unorganised. As such, they can never exercise any collective power.

A real trade union is something different. It must be based on the organisation of the workers within each factory. The workers, through their organisation, must be able to deal with most of their own problems. The union organisers should act only as expert advisers in very difficult situations.

The factory organisation is the most important unit of the trade union. It is only on the basis of a strong factory organisation that it is possible to build up a union which can negotiate for all the workers in an industry.

The shop steward organisation within each factory has three functions:

- 1) to deal in concrete terms with the problems of that factory;
- 2) to keep the rank and file members in close contact with the union, to keep them informed, to collect subscriptions, and to mobilise them when necessary.
- 3) to act as a training centre and as a recruiting ground for potential union leadership. Through strong factory organisation the union can produce its own leaders, instead of being dependent on outsiders.

The main organisational principle is that the workers' organisation should be able to combine short term benefits with an awareness of long term goals. One of the difficulties with many organisations in South Africa is that they often talk about excellent long term goals like freedom and justice, but are not able to work out tactics which will help to solve people's immediate problems.

For the trade union, the long term goal is not just higher wages. In fact higher wages is always only a secondary goal. The main goal is human dignity. We said earlier that exploitation is a situation in which the workers have no control over the way in which their own bodies are used. Exploitation is above all a denial of human dignity, a way of turning a person into a mere means to somebody else's satisfaction. The aim of trade unionism is to change the workers from being part of the machinery into being full participants, in the production and distribution of goods. The aim is to help workers to participate in deciding how work should be done and to participate in deciding how the product should be distributed. That is, higher wages are merely a by-product of human dignity.

The trade union is itself a beginning of the affirmation of human dignity. Through the trade union the workers can immediately begin to assert some

The third set of issues concerns "politics."

7) To what extent should emerging african unions concern themselves with politics ?

8) To what extent should they be willing to cooperate with these institutions of separate development?

The parallel unions are non-political, and Tucsas itself is strongly opposed to homeland governments having any role.

BAWU appears to be explicitly political, but does not accept any collaboration with separate development institutions.

The UTP unions seem to be against any political involvement, but the Tuacc unions are in favour of at least cooperation with KwaZulu

control over their own lives. They can do this both through their power within their own workers organisation, and through the power that which they can exert through that organisation within the factory. A democratic trade union organisation is in itself an assertion of human dignity, and ~~at the same time~~ a means to greater human dignity. And at the same time it can offer immediate short-term benefits of a material kind.

It is for this reason that we believe that the development of trade union organisation is central to any "black renaissance" in South Africa.

Most black South Africans are workers. They experience the problems of oppression most acutely at their work place, and it is there that they must begin to fight back. This means that the struggle of the workers through their trade unions must be the ~~central~~ pivot of any attempt to reassert the right of black people to full humanity.

It is important for other blacks to realise this, and to accept the struggle for freedom and dignity can only be won if it ~~takes into account~~

~~the~~
is based upon the interests of the workers. Any attempt by the educated class of functionaries to go it alone, to concentrate only on the problem of discrimination, or to decide to speak for the workers, is doomed to failure. What is needed is a strategy which combines the particular interests of the peasantry, the workers, and the functionaries. The first step in the construction of such a strategy is the recognition that these groups have distinct special interests.

where that is possible.

The debate is slightly confused by the use of the word "political".

By saying that unions should ~~be~~ or should not become involved in politics one might be affirming or denying one of two different things:

1) Should the unions press for certain changes in the law; that is, should they act, inter alia, as a political pressure group? Certainly both the functioning of the unions and the lives of these workers are affected by the laws, so it would seem relevant for them to act as a pressure group in this way. Certainly all the registered unions in South Africa that are of any consequence do this in some way or other.

2) Should the unions put forward or support a whole programme of government; that is, should they become or take part in or support a political party? This is a much more complicated question. There are also two quite distinct questions: the question of principle as to whether this should ever be the role of a trade union; and the question of tactics, as to whether it is would be a possible or useful thing to do in South Africa today.

I suspect that Tucsá and UTP would answer no to both questions, and BAWU would answer yes to both questions. The response of the TUACC unions would be more complex. Certainly there would be an acceptance that at present a South African working class party is not a sensible possibility. On the other hand there would be a feeling that it is desirable to have homeland governments which are sensitive to the needs of the workers, and willing to push for legislative changes favourable to the workers. There is probably also an awareness that the working class has a specific set of interests which needs also to find political expression., in principle at least. However at present this is neither possible nor desirable.

The need at present is simply to build strong trade union with a broadly based leadership. It is important to stress that this is also, in a broad sense, a political act. Politics is about power, and so is trade unionism. The existence of strong trade unions ~~in~~ African workers

in South Africa has a significance for the overall balance of power. It decreases the capacity of the oligarchy to control the distribution of wealth in the way on which they think fit. It introduces another factor which the holders of political power have to consider in all their actions. ~~If South Africa remains a stable society in 1960~~

In any event a strong trade union movement represents the best hope for a change towards a more just society. In the event of a progressive

deterioration of the present structure as a result of guerilla incursions, the existence of a strong african organisation with well-trained working class personnel will be a crucial factor in preventing long and bloody war involving possible mutual genocide.

From any perspective it is important to build up strong black organisation ~~in~~ South Africa. This means accepting certain realities of the South African situation. Among those realities ~~is~~ are a number of institutions which can be used in various ways.

It is important to understand that South Africa is a complex ~~and~~ society moved by many strange currents and cross-currents. It is

not simply a case of a group of united and determined people wielding ~~in~~ harsh (and omnipotent) control over the rest. It

is much more complicated than that, and real action has to be rooted in an understanding of the present complexities, not in ~~in~~ reference to the more obvious and unpleasant simplicities.

One of those complexities is the set of separate development institutions. This is why the Tugce unions, while being in no

sense supporters of separate development, any more than is But elezi,

have estimated that there are strong advantages, in the form both of legitimacy and protection, to be gained from association with Kwazulu.

Use of such institutions cannot be ruled out on principle, and this applies also to the Works Committee system. It must be based on an

analysis of the range of possibilities available ^{particular} at any time and place.

If you can kill ^{bad} institutions by not using them, that's fine. But if

they will continue to exist ~~any~~ even if unused, then a more sophisticated treatment is called for.

Glass Factory at Bundenheim -

76% UAW owned,
Glasshütte Bundenheim

union membership among blue-collar - 99%
" " " white collar - 65%
lower earnings 5% -

Turkish	140
Yugoslavia	20
Greeks	
Italians	
Spanish	

2 ungeschult members of Betriebsrat
but if neither of the 2 members
are free to be at the Betriebsrat
office during office (bkr consultation)
then 2 other members of the
bkr are asked to stand in. No influence from
management.

Monthly report of all accidents in plant, absenteeism & sickness.

Problems facing bkrat - noise, environmental pollution
(dumping of bottles), housing for foreign workers
(this involves political/social involvement with municipality)
rapid turn over of foreign workers, overtime

Aufsichtsrat - 1/3 members of bkrat. from diff plants, 1, 2, 4 actioners
pressure for co-determination. Have access to
financial data of total company & to company's
audits

Co-determination of Betriebsrat & management
over worker problems - no one can be fired
just without knowledge & agreement of bkrat.

Hertz - chairman of bkrat - opposed to idea of there
being differences in the t.u. organization of
foreign workers.

bkrat has a sub committee for housing.

Linde

Composition of Work Force:

No. of workers: 2,400, of which 700 are women.

migrant workers: italians, greeks + spanish

Composition of Betriebsrat

19 members 4 full-time workers on Betriebsrat.

for each nationality, there is a representative on the
B.Rat.

All members of I.G. Metall.

Vertrauensleute:

60 elected but only 45 are actively involved in their
work.

Union Training for Vertrauensleute: 3 months per year.

Regular meetings between Betriebsrat + Vertrauensleute.

According to the first Vertrauensmannschaftsbesatz: 4 men
meetings between Betriebsrat + workers per year. Management
representatives may be permitted by Betriebsrat to
attend the meetings.

In addition the Betriebsrat have started here
additional meetings for each nationality in order that
their work problems can be assumed easily in
their home languages. Although by law, there is
no necessity for management to pay the
workers for the latter meetings, here at Linde the
Betriebsrat have got their agreement to pay not
for the to deduct the meeting-time for
the wages of the foreign workers.

Problems with Foreign workers.

1. Language difficulty.
state but not really
want to work in

are language schools run by
made use of by foreigners
evening.

2. Difficulty in getting them into trade union. Tend not to want to become involved.

Trade union problems:

1. only 40% of workers at trade members of the t.u.
2. both for women + foreign workers tend to be apathetic to union organization. The German women seem to think that if their husbands are already members of the trade union, there is no need for them to become members as well.
3. How to instil a working class consciousness + importance of trade union organization into those workers who are not already members of the union?
4. Weakness of veterans' clubs.

Attempts of t.u. at solving the problems:

1. pamphlets
2. training programmes for veterans' clubs
3. training courses for veterans' clubs

Betriebsrat:

Task: negotiation with management about higher pay, work conditions + humanization of work.

Consultation of Betriebsrat with management over employment of new workers. The Betriebsrat have, however, no real power of veto over employment except for exceptional reasons. It is here more on a consultative basis rather than on a power of the Betriebsrat over managerial decisions.

With new workers entering trade, there is a 6 weeks probation period, during which time they are given the opportunity to work in different kinds of jobs so that they would be able better to decide which kind of job would suit them best. Also more important is the

fact that workers who are all-rounders are more profitable to the management. But what about this there is a psychological problem for the new workers: being new in their situation they do not have the confidence to move ^{workers} from one job to another. Women especially tend not to want to become all-rounders. They prefer the stability of one set job.

Wages: wage-scale centred round conditions of work (noise, heat etc), qualifications, training & also shifts. at divide there is one normal shift + two other shifts.

In principle there is no distinction male & female wages. No legal male/female job reservation. But while the women are by + large only supplementary income earners + are not really interested in fighting for higher wages. With the men however, since they are by + large, the bread-earners in their families, there is always the fight for higher wages.

Managerialization of work:

~~Communication~~ → improvement of communication system between managers + women with the workers. strong this the behaviour is still a step to rid their factory of the authoritarian managerial attitudes.

Have got for the workers, in addition to the legal breaks, two additional breaks which are paid for by the firm. But do not think that this is enough; they think there should be more.

3. Attempt to increase higher productivity through the introduction of more specialized machines. (It is thought that training that the labour becomes more familiar with new technological improvements etc.)

For foreign visitors ~~also~~ there are night-training
schools run by state, chambers of commerce +
trade unions.

REPORT ON EAST ASIATICS

We interviewed two groups. The first consists of Quality Products, Natal Oil & Soap Products, Natal Oil Products and Dana Foods which are centrally controlled and have one personnel manager between them. The second group consists of Interflex and Rubber Engineering and is no longer connected with East Asiatic.

We drew up questionnaires which were handed to workers by an African interviewer who also gathered information by talking to the workers (payslips proved very difficult to obtain). We also interviewed the personnel manager of the group.

Here are the results of our investigations:

QUALITY PRODUCTS

(287 African, Indian & Coloured workers of whom 35 Africans were interviewed. 10/11/73).

<u>Wage Breakdown</u>		<u>Wage</u>	<u>No. of Workers</u>
A. 0-1 years service	Labourers	R16,00 - R17,99	3
		18,00 - 19,99	4
	First Aider	R24,05	1
B. <u>Over 1 Year</u>	Labourers	R14,00	1
		16,00 - 17,99	2
		18,00 - 19,99	11
		21,00	1
		22,00 - 23,99	2
	Delivery men	14,50	1
		15,00 - 19,99	2
	Lift Driver	23,50	1
	Drivers	24,00	1
		26,00	1
		33,45	1

9 of the 33 workers had their grades mentioned :

<u>Grade</u>	<u>No. of workers</u>	<u>Wages</u>
1	1	R24,05
2	2	23,75, 23,50
3	1	24,00
4	1	18,40
5	4	14,00, 16,60, 17,50
		17,55

There is an attendance bonus of R2 per week and 2 hours latitude per week is allowed. Most workers have had wage increases of between R2 and R6 since last year. One worker's wage was raised from R11,88 to R17,75 and another's from R11,50 to R14,50. (The first worker had been new in the firm).

The average increase was R4,10 and most increases occurred in January 197.

Hours Everyone works 46 hours a week except drivers, deliverymen, etc.

Answers to questions:

	YES	NO	
Is overtime compulsory?	6	23	(6 said sometimes)
Are you happy your job will last?	6	13	(16 didn't know)
Are trade unions a good idea?	13	2	(8 know nothing about them)
Does your firm provide a pension or other fund?	5	24	(3 didn't know)
What complaints do you have about the firm?	30 said wages were too low and 6 said they should be treated better.		

The firm doesn't help with housing, transport or free meals.
There is an annual paid leave of 2 weeks
There seems to be a long service fund.

THE WORKS COMMITTEE

The Works Committee has been in existence for 2 years. Most workers refer their complaints to the committee. Asked if it handles complaints successfully 14 workers said YES; 14 said NO; 4 didn't know and 3 said it tries hard. Most workers feel that management bullies the Works Committee.

The Committee meets regularly once a month and management never refuses to see it.

NATAL OIL & SOAP PRODUCTS and NATAL OIL PRODUCTS

These are virtually one factory as they are in the same building and have the same management. We got a figure of 380 workers for the factory but we don't know if this is for N.O.S, N.O.P. or both. We interviewed 15 Africans : 4 from N.O.S. and 11 from N.O.P.

WAGES

	<u>Grade</u>	<u>No. of Workers</u>	<u>Wages</u>
A. <u>0-1 year</u>	Labourers (Grade 3)	1	R18,00, R21,00
	Watchmen (No grade)	3	All R20,00
<u>Over 1 year</u>	Grade 2	3	R19,50, 23,00
			22,00
	Labourers (Grade 3)	6	4 x R21,00, 18,00
			19,50
	Labourers (Grade 5)	1	R19,50

Attendance bonus of R2 per week.
There were increases of up to R7 since last year, averaging R3,10.
The workers have a 46 hour week.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

	YES	NO	
Is overtime compulsory?	4	11	
Are you happy that your job will last 2		6	(6 didn't know)
Are trade unions a good idea?	9	0	(6 know nothing about it)
Does the firm provide a pension or other fund?	5	10	

What complaints do you have about the firm? All 15 said wages should be increased.

Again the firm doesn't help with transport etc. and there is the same paid leave.

WORKS COMMITTEE

The Committee's relationship with management and the workers seems very similar to the Quality Products Committee.

DANA FOODS

There are only two workers in the firm with salaries of R56,00 and R60,00 a month. One had a salary of R40 last year.

GENERAL

The firm seems to be more "enlightened" than most in Durban but not very much. There have been no reports of victimisation and the Works Committee seems to deal fairly open with management. In our interview with them they wouldn't tell us much because we wouldn't tell them for whom we were working. They gave us some wage figures from a cost sheet which indicated that African and Indian workers received an averagewage of about R30. The Personnel Manager said that the PDL was taken into account when deciding wages. The wages for each worker does not necessarily depend in what grade work he does.

There is a factory Doctor who attends to workers at the factory but the firm offers no other medical benefits.

POVERTY DATUM LINE

There are at least two PDLs for Durban. One was done by the University of Port Elizabeth and was R78,84 in March 1973. The other was done by the Economics Dept. of the University of Natal and was R110,56 in March 1974.

The Port Elizabeth PDL is rather unscientific (the person who conducted it has admitted this to some extent). This is the PDL used by East Asiatic. The Durban one, on the other hand, has been very scientifically worked out.

Memorandum on assistance to Trade Unions.

1 A trade union should be able to subsist from its own income from members. Only under these circumstances is there continuous pressure on union officials to increase membership, to satisfy and keep existing members, and, in general, to keep in close touch with the shop-floor. Otherwise the union is likely to remain a small body which specialises in issuing press statements, but provides no real service to anybody other than its paid officials. There have been a number of such client-unions in recent South African history.

2 In the early stages of its development a union could benefit from external financial support, but this support should only be given after some organising initiative has been undertaken by workers in the industry concerned, and it should be limited both in time and in amount. It should also be given on a decreasing sliding-scale, in terms of which the union would immediately have to bear some costs, and at the end of a two to three year period would have gradually taken over total financial responsibility. A guide to the amount needed is given by the annexed memorandum prepared by the Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Committee. This programme envisages a system whereby aid to existing unions would be rapidly phased out, and these unions would take the responsibility for training organisers for the new unions as they were started.

Given the sprawling configuration of most urban industrial centres in South Africa, transport is a serious problem for union organisers. New unions will not be able to buy their own vehicles, but without their own transport their organising work will be severely hampered. Financial assistance for buying vehicles will therefore be a priority.

least , there will be different unions in each area for each industry. The major industrial areas are widely separated, and it would not be financially possible to have a powerful central organisation at this stage. Where there are different trade unions for the same industry in different areas, it is obviously desirable that they should keep in touch with one another, or even that they should be formally linked, but in either case they will necessarily operate more or less autonomously.)

6. In the field of training there already exists bodies providing the services and organised roughly as described above. These are the Institute for Industrial Education, which at present confines its activities to Natal, but will extend to Cape Town and Johannesburg next year; and the Urban Training Project, which has its headquarters in Johannesburg, and an office in Durban. These two bodies cooperate closely, and offer programmes which are to a certain extent complementary. The IIE provides a basic correspondence course on industrial economics and the principles of trade unionism, while the UTP specialises in shorter, more specialised courses for particular unions. There is some overlap, in that the IIE is also beginning to offer such courses, but there is a great demand for both kinds of courses, and the overlap does not lead to any unnecessary duplication. It is desirable that these two bodies should continue to receive financial support. Financial aid could be usefully supplemented by sending out experts in particular technical fields, such as collective bargaining techniques, the administration of medical aid, pension and benefit funds, and industrial safety, to assist in running specialised intensive courses on these topics.
7. The greatest need at present lies in the field of legal aid. In the main centres there are lawyers who offer free assistance on an informal basis. But full-time professionally staffed legal advice bureaux in each centre are urgently needed. South African factory legislation is relatively advanced and enlightened, but both workers and managers are often ignorant of the law. The Department of Labour is understaffed and cannot keep an adequate check on the observation of legislation. Therefore only strong trade union action with specialised assistance can make sure that the laws are obeyed. The laws with regard to workers' organisation and representation is also very complex, and is likely to lead to much litigation. At present managers seem to be taking advantage of much ignorance of the law to impose the least desirable form of representation on workers. It will be particularly important to take care in selecting test cases in such a way that their successful outcome can apply to as many workers as possible.
8. Thus we recommend that the major part of any new assistance to African unions in South Africa should be used to set up a legal aid clinic in each centre. Each bureau should be staffed by a full-time lawyer and a typist, and should have sufficient funds to retain an advocate. The work of the bureau should be supervised by a board consisting of a representative appointed by the funding body and one representative of each of the unions open to Africans in the area. Each union should contribute on a proportional basis to the cost of the bureau, and complaints should be processed first by the union staff before being referred to the bureau. This is so that the union itself should handle complaints which can be dealt with direct intervention with management. Complaints from

non-union members should also be dealt with for a small fee. Legal problems not arising from the employment situation should also be dealt with if possible. A further important service which could be associated with the legal aid bureau would be a book-keeping service which could assist union treasurers in keeping their books and organising their finances.

9. As regards the funding of these bureaus, it would be important to encourage firms, whether locally or foreign owned, to contribute a certain amount.
10. Bureaus should be set up at the very least in the following centres:
Johannesburg,
Pretoria,
Durban,
Port Elizabeth,
East London, and
Cape Town.
Bloemfontein and Kimberley should also be considered.

The minimum cost for each bureau would be in the region of R14,000 per annum, assuming that there are lawyers who would be willing to work for low salaries.

Attorney's retainer	R500 per month
Typist	150
2 Clerks @ R200 per month	400
Office rent	50
stationery, telephone and equipment	50

approximately = 14,000 per year

There would also be a need for a reserve to cover the cost of employing an advocate for test cases, paying bail and possible fines, and to make it possible to pay for costs in the case of risky but important private prosecutions and test cases.

It should be possible to staff such a legal firm with young lawyers and article clerks willing to work for low wages for a year or two both for reasons of conscience, and also to gain important experience.

very important for union:

Background

Works Councils - elected every 3 years by all workers in factory - this means that WCs can have people on them who are not members of the trade union. This represents problems for the trade union. often conflict between union members & non-union members.

Composition: chairman, vice-chairman. No. of members depend on no. of workers in the factory.
3 members of WC take on full-time jobs for the WC. Full-time members paid by firm.

Structure of Co-determination

National level - no real co-determination at this level - so far only talks.

Company level: Shareholders Committee \rightarrow 2/3 workers + 1/3 shareholders

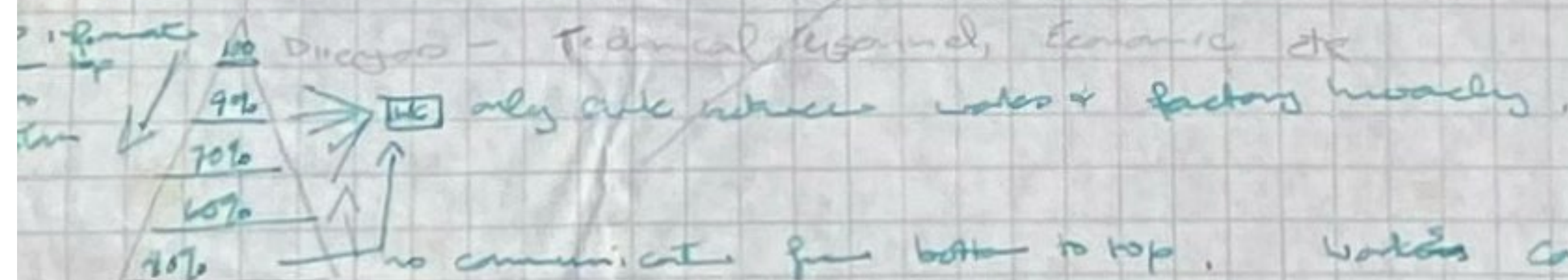
Plant level: W Councils

Work place level - no co-determination at this level.

Just election of Works Councils. Workers delegate responsibility to WC but WC themselves not involved in the negotiations.

Wages are not discussed at co-determination level, but outside it between the management associations & the trade unions.

Co-determination involves discussions about factory work-conditions, wage increases above the national minimum level agreed upon by the management-associations & the trade unions.



Works Councils do not really solve communication-flow problem because they are separated from the workers. no active involvement of workers in Works Councils.

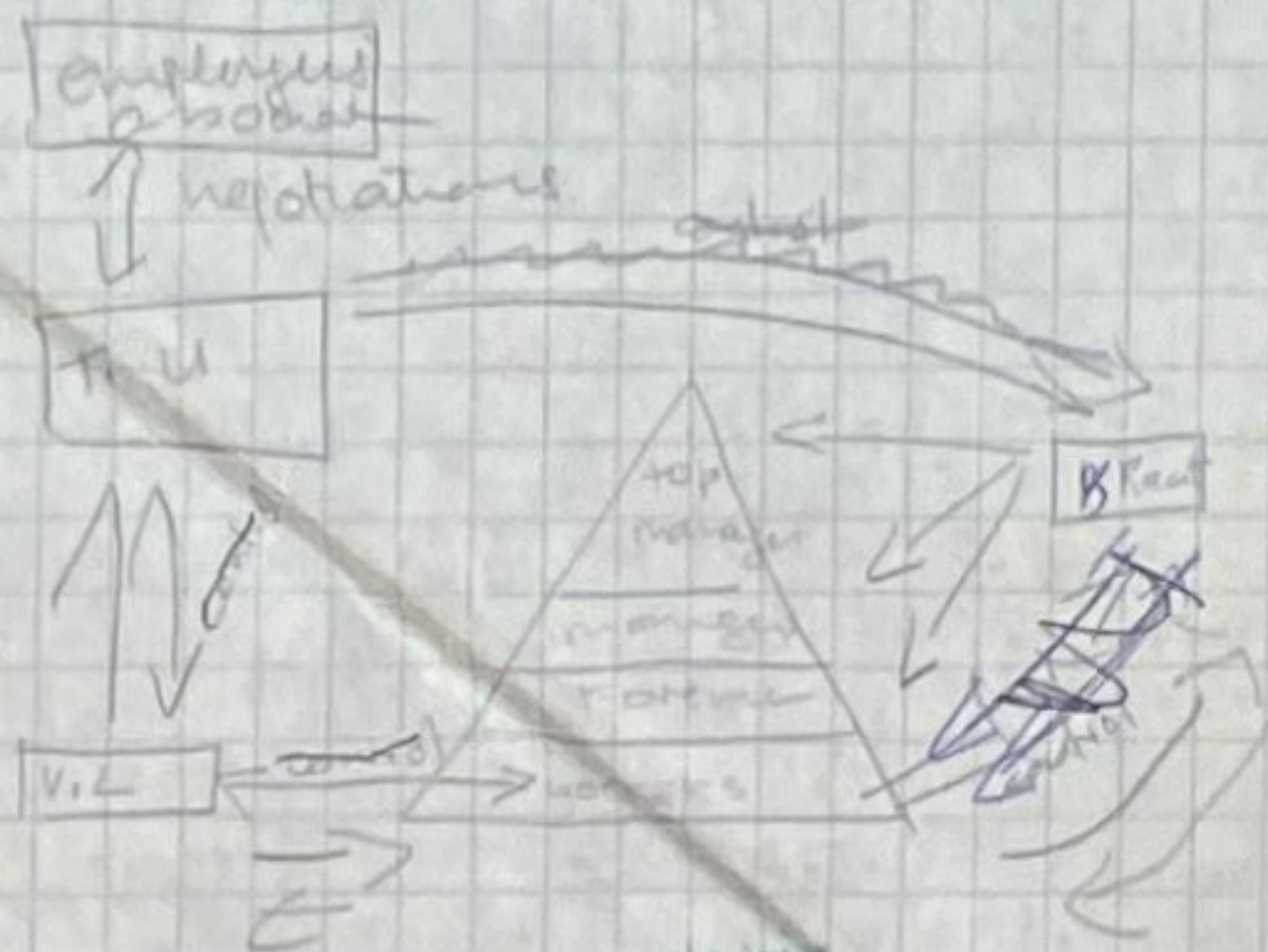
If WC backed by trade union, they could be very strong. If not backed by TU, there is always possibility of conflict & competition between Verbandsräte & W. Councils. Workers could experience unions not officially represented at the plant. They could only be involved at plant level if the Works Council is fully behind the Works Council.

Another way in which TU could be involved at plant level is through the election of Verbandsräte. Normally at least 25 elected in each plant. Basic problem is that the Verbandsräte are not protected against management.

Respectively, legally the Betriebsräte are protected
 One danger is that the ~~we~~ Betriebsräte see identity with
 management against the worker.

Problem: Since trade unions outside the coordination
 structure, ~~negotiate~~ negotiate with management
 for initial wage in the industries, negotiate not
 only for trade union members but for all workers
 in the industry. Question of non-trade unions
 is that given that this is the case, why the
 own wages are raised even though we are
 not members of the trade union, why would
 we now become members? Also, why should
 trade union members now remain members of
 the trade unions?

- could also be an education program help put out by
 union in attempt to handle this problem]



Verbandsrat forbidden to ^{organize} strikes, but de facto there can be
 good co-operation between Betriebsräte + Verbandsrat
 in question of strikes.

Trade Unions and Strikes

On the 20 th of October Britain is in ~~for~~ for another big strike. The nation-wide Amalgamated Engineering Union is calling out its one million members. Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain, It will produce a vast outpouring of criticism of Trade Unions in general and of the AEU in particular. In this ~~image~~ era of "images" the Trade Union movement has a bad one, and it is getting worse. Trade Unions are said to be responsible for all Britains ills: they are selfish, dictatorial, irresponsible, inconsiderate of the public and of their own rank and file; they hobble industry through restrictive practices and they ~~cause~~ cause inflation by greedy wage claims.

Are they really that bad? First, what is a ~~union~~ trade union? Some critics paint a picture of doctrinaire agitators spending their time keeping workers from doing work that they are only too anxious to do. But a union cannot make men strike when they do not want to strike. Shop stewards or strikers can bring a certain amount of pressure to bear on a minority who refuse to join in (just as employers can, and do, bring pressure to bear on strike leaders). But these pressures are only possible when there is already a majority in favour of striking.

In the long run both ~~shop~~^{shop} stewards -- unpaid volunteers who do union work within the factory in addition to their ordinary work -- and full-time union leaders have to be re-elected, and so cannot go completely counter to the wishes of the members. This applies more to the shop steward, who is continually in touch with the men than it does to the full-time official. The latter ~~whose~~ whose post also usually comes up for reelection less frequently, can escape almost as far from the control of his electors as can an elected government between elections. But, as with ~~the~~^{the} government, this almost always works in a conservative direction. Bureaucrats are not naturally adventurous. And it is much easier to prevent a strike occurring than it is to force out men who don't want to strike.

In fact 90% of the ~~strikes~~^{file} in Britain are unofficial. The rank and ~~file~~ are much more militant than their leaders are.

But why strike? The most important point about a strike, and the most often forgotten one, is that it takes two sides to make a strike. It takes somebody making a demand and somebody refusing it. The strikers, who are making the demand, always seem to be the "aggressors", but you can only really tell who is to blame if you consider the reasonableness of the demand. Whatever else they strike for, people don't strike for the pleasure of it. For the simple fact is that people work in order to get paid, and when they are on strike they don't get paid. They may get a union allowance, but it is small; during the seamen's strike the strikers got £3 a week strike pay.

Of course, the employers don't ^{1/}refuse demands because they enjoy doing so, either. Strikes ~~do~~ hurt both sides. But the employers have a built in advantage in that they have larger reserves and so they can, if the worst comes to the worst, carry on longer without producing than can the workers without earning. And, to come back to "image", they have a built in image advantage too. Although either the workers (wage-demand), or the employers (increase in work intensity) may take the first private step in ~~the~~ the process leading up to the strike, it is always the workers ~~make~~ who take the first public step. So newspapers headline "Seamen Hold Nation To Ransom", but never "Shipowners Hold Nation To Ransom", although they may well be refusing a raise, and thus causing a strike, not because they cannot afford it, but because they are convinced that a nervous government will come in on their side if they hold out long enough.

What are strikes about? In Britain about half the strikes are not about wages at all. They have to do with questions of organisation and discipline-- tea-breaks, work speed, who is to do what job, and so on. A lot of this comes under the heading "restrictive practices". Some so-called restrictive practices revolve about the problem of work intensity. It is, within reason, in the worker's interest

to work as relaxedly as possible --even~~if~~ only so as ~~to~~ to have enough energy left to enjoy his spare time -- while it is in the employer's interest for him to work as quickly as possible. I say "within reason" because ~~this~~ is not in the worker's interest to work so slowly that that ~~his~~ his employer goes bankrupt. Nor is it in his employer's interest to work him so hard that he drops dead. Many conflicts result either because the employers try directly to speed up previously accepted work norms, or else because the introduction of new methods and new machines either seems to, or does, require a greater intensity of work.

The other form of restrictive practice at first seems much less justified. This is "feather~~bedding~~-bedding"; the process whereby, for example, the US railwaymen's union was able to force the railway to continue employing coal-shovellers on trains long after they had switched to the use of oil-fired engines. In this way unions protect their member's ~~job~~ jobs, but certainly at the cost of social efficiency. On the other hand it is perhaps unreasonable that some members of an industry should suffer as ~~the~~ result of technical improvements in their industry. Nor is it very reasonable of critics, and especially editorialists, to morally condemn people unwilling to become redundant so as to sacrifice themselves for the national good, when the critics and the nation are unwilling to spread the sacrifice by providing adequate ~~retraining~~ retraining facilities, ~~saying~~ that Workers skilled only in the use of out-of-date machines have to be able to acquire the new skills that they need. Otherwise, and especially in a period of high unemployment, restrictive practices will certainly increase, however many ~~sermons~~ ^{sermons} one preaches against them.

The other major sin of which ^{unions} they are accused is ~~that~~ of causing inflation by forcing up wages. A rise in wages need not necessarily mean a rise in prices. It could mean a fall in profits or dividends. But as ^{matter} ~~matter~~ of fact it very rarely does. In Britain the ratio of wages to profits has remained more or less constant throughout ^{this} century. There is no obvious reason why this ratio should be considered

sacrosanct. One might well ask ~~who~~ ^{is} who ~~is~~ ^{is} causing inflation, then; the workers by demanding higher wages, or the employers by insisting on not cutting ~~dividend~~ dividends?

Apart from this ~~we~~ wage increases ~~have~~ ^{do} have at least one good long-term effect. By ~~making~~ making wages a relatively more expensive factor of ~~production~~ production they encourage employers to increase efficiency by mechanising. From this point of view it is arguable that the Labour government's present policy of wage-restraint plus unemployment is tailor-made to prevent any increase in the efficiency of British industry!

Incidentally, wage demands or wage gains are often exaggerated, both by the ^{unions} ~~unions~~, in order to impress their members, and by the ^{employers} ~~employers~~, in order to shock the public. A relatively small weekly increase, when multiplied by the number of people in the industry, and by the period the agreement is to run for, may swell into what seems to the man in the street to be an unreasonably greedy number of millions, but is still in fact a small amount in comparison with the money involved in the whole industry.

Within the context of capitalism there are two ways in which one can justify trade unions and strikes. From the point of view of Welfare State ^{Capitalism} ~~Capitalism~~ it can be argued ~~that~~ that the employer has a responsibility to every ~~member~~ ^{member} of his factory, and that the employee has a right to take action if this responsibility is being neglected. On the other hand, in more traditional ~~terms~~ terms, it may be said that the employer's only responsibility is to himself, and that it is his right to try to make as much money as possible, in any possible way. But then he can hardly blame the worker if the worker tries to use ~~his~~ power he has to get as much as he can for himself.

A capitalist ^{society is} ~~society~~ a ^{competitive society} ~~capitalist society~~, so it seems unreasonable to object when the ^{worker} ~~worker~~ tries to compete too. This doesn't mean that ~~the~~ unions and strikers are always right. But they aren't always wrong, either.

~~No strike~~ *Turn*

Trade Unions and Strikes.

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~~The nation-wide Amalgamated Engineering Union is calling out its one million members. Whatever the outcome, one thing is certain, it will produce a vast outpouring of criticism of Trade Unions in general and of the AEU in particular.~~ *Any strike in the UK has at least one predictable result;*

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In this era of "images" the Trade Unions' movement has a bad one, and it is getting worse. Trade Unions are said to be responsible for all Britain's ills; they are selfish, dictatorial, irresponsible, inconsiderate of the public and of their own rank and file, they hobble industry through restrictive practices and they cause inflation by greedy wage claims.

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The other major sin of which unions are accused is that of causing inflation by forcing up wages. A rise in wages need not necessarily mean a rise in prices. It could mean a fall in profits or dividends. But as a matter of fact it very rarely does. In Britain the ratio of wages to profits has remained more or less constant throughout this century. There is no obvious reason why this ratio should be considered sacrosanct. One might well ask who is causing inflation then; the workers by demanding higher wages, or the employers by insisting on not cutting dividends?

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Within the context of capitalism there are two ways in which one can justify trade unions and strikes. From the point of view of Welfare State capitalism it can be argued that the employer has a responsibility to every member of his factory, and that the employee has a right to take action if this responsibility is being neglected. On the other hand, in more traditional terms, it may be said that the employer's only responsibility is to himself, and that it is his right to try and make as much money as possible, in any possible way. But then he can hardly blame the worker if the worker tries to use what power he has to get as much as he can for himself.

A capitalist society is a competitive society, so it seems unreasonable to object when the worker tries to compete too. This doesn't mean that unions and strikers are always right. But they aren't always wrong either.

3. However, it is important to distinguish between the basic running costs of the union and the costs of ancillary services required by the union. The union requires training for its shop stewards and executive members. Much of its work will be taken up with handling workers' complaints, and this will often require legal advice, and not infrequently will require legal action. Both training and legal aid will be costly. It is obviously desirable that these services be available on a common basis to a number of unions. Financial aid offered to unions, therefore, should be used to set up such ancillary services.
4. These services would also help the unions to provide important benefits for their members, and to encourage unionisation, but at the same time they would not remove the incentive to the union officials to build up membership in order to ensure the financial strength of the union.
5. Also, assistance of this type would be able at least partly to avoid problems arising out of inter-union conflict. In several centres there already more than one union appealing, in theory at least, to the same constituency. This is obviously highly undesirable, but in this situation it must be left to the workers to decide which of the two unions they wish to support. It must not be decided by a foreign funding body. This can only be avoided if a common service is offered to all unions in an area. A body providing legal aid or training could be supervised by a board representing all the relevant trade unions in an area. (In South Africa, it is probable that for the time being at

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Are they really that bad? First, what are unions? Some of their critics talk as though the unions are dictatorial bodies which spend their time keeping workers from doing the work they are only too anxious to do. But unions can't make men strike when they don't want to strike. Strikers or shop stewards can always, of course, bring a variety of psychological pressures to bear on a minority who refuse to join a strike, (just as an employers can & do bring pressures to bear on strike leaders). But these pressures can only work when there is already a majority in favour of striking. In the long run, with shop stewards - unpaid volunteers who

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But why strike? The most important point about a strike, & the most often forgotten one, is that it takes two sides to make a strike. It takes somebody making a demand & somebody refusing the demand. At the strike, who are making the demand, always seem to be in

the position of aggressors, but ^{you} ~~one~~ can only really tell who is to blame if you consider the reasonableness of the demand whatever else they strike for, people don't strike for pleasure. For the simple fact is that people work in order to get paid, & when they are on strike they don't get paid. They may get a union allowance, but it is small; during the seamen's strike in 1966 they strikers got £3 a week strike pay.

Of course, the employers don't refuse the strikers' demands for pleasure either. Strike hurt both sides. But the employers have a built-in advantage, in that they have larger reserves & so can, if the worst comes to the worst, carry on longer without producing than the workers can without earning. And, to come back to "image", they have a built-in advantage in image too. Although either the workers (by demand) or the employer (by increase in work intensity) may take the first prime step in the process leading up to the strike, it is ~~always~~ the workers who take the first public step. So newspapers headline "^{Seamen} ~~Mariners~~ hold nation to ransom", but never "Shipowners hold nation to ransom", although they may well be refusing a raise, & thus causing the strike, not because they can't afford it but because they are convinced that a nervous government will come in on their side if they hold out long enough.

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Among all their other sins, unions are accused of causing inflation by forcing up wages. A rise in wages need not necessarily mean a rise in prices. It could mean a fall in profits or dividends. As a matter of fact it very rarely does. In UK the ratio of wages to profits has remained more or less stable throughout this century. But there is no obvious reason why the present ratio should be considered sacrosanct. One might well ask who is causing inflation, then: the workers by demanding higher wages, or the employers by insisting on their not cutting dividends? But apart from this wage increases do have at least one good long term effect. By making wages a relatively more expensive factor of production they encourage employers to increase efficiency by mechanising.

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Incidentally, wage demands or gains are often exaggerated both by unions, to influence their members, & by the press, to shock the public. A relatively small weekly increase, when multiplied by the period number of people in the industry & by the period the agreement is to run for, may swell to an unreasonably large number of millions, which strikes the man in the street as abominably greedy, but still is fact is a tiny amount in comparison with the money involved in the whole industry.

Within the context of capitalism there are two ways in which one might try to justify strikers. Thus, from the point of view of Welfare State capitalism it can be argued that the employer has a responsibility to every member of his factory & that the employee has a right to take action if this responsibility is being neglected. On the other hand, in more traditional terms, it may be said that the employer's only responsibility is to himself, & that it is his right to try to make as much as possible, in any possible way. But then he can hardly blame the worker if he tries to use what power he has to make as much as possible for himself. A capitalist society is a competitive society, so it seems unreasonable to object when the worker tries to compete too.

This doesn't mean that unions & strikers are always right. But they aren't always wrong, either.

THE POLITICS OF MIGRANT LABOUR

I am not going to spend time talking about the suffering caused by South Africa's system of forced migrant labour. If you do not know about that by now then you are incapable of learning.

This seminar is about the politics of migrant labour. I want to use my 20 minutes to make two points. The first point is that the system of migrant labour is not something which grew up by accident. It was created by political action by the white holders of power.

The second point is that the policy of homeland independence cannot hope to solve the political problem of migrant labour.

So I want to begin by talking briefly about the origins and purpose of the system of migrant labour. Some people seem to think that it started as follows: They think that whites came into uninhabited areas of South Africa and developed them. The Blacks living in the neighbouring areas saw how nice life was in the developed areas, and they began to stream voluntarily in to look for jobs. Because they are foreigners they naturally cannot expect the same rights as native white South Africans. But anyway they benefit from the privilege of being able to work in the industries created by the whites, and then they can return to live in their own countries.

Now this is of course nonsense. White control was imposed over the whole of South Africa by military conquest. ~~Africans were not~~ Much of the African land was taken away from them. This was done for two reasons. Firstly it was so that white farmers could have the land. But the second reason was just as important. It was done so that the Africans would not have enough land and so would be forced to work for the whites. ~~Africans did not come~~ Most Africans do not come voluntarily into the white areas. They were forced to do so by a conscious policy of land alienation, & taxation. Development in the ~~reserves~~ white-controlled areas and underdevelopment in the reserves is not produced by white hard work and black laziness.

And it was not out of kindness that the Africans were left with 13% of the land, instead of having it all taken away. It had two big advantages for capitalists. The first advantage was that while workers had some land in the reserves they could be paid wages below subsistence level. The reserves were designed in such a way that the men were forced to work, but their families could produce some food in the reserves. Wages could be lower and profits could be higher.

The second advantage was that the system of compounds and pass laws made it much easier to control African workers and to prevent them from organising trade unions. This also helped to keep down wages.

Answer/Impendulo:

1. It can sell shares, borrow money, or reinvest its profit.
Ingadayisa amashezi, ingatshelaka imali, noma ifake izinzuzo zayo ebhizinisini iyizalanise.
2. We call it the company's Liabilities.
Siyibiza ngokuthi ama Liabilities enkampani.
3. They are a part of its Fixed Assets.
Ayingxenywe yama Fixed Assets ayo.

QUESTIONS & NOTES/INIBUZO NAMANOTH:

1. What are the three main ways in which a company can get the money which it needs?
Yiziphi izindlela ezintathu ezisemqoka inkampani engathole ngazo imali eyidingayo?

2. What do we call all the money which the company owes?
Siyibiza ngokuthi yini lonke imali ekwelwa yinkampani?

3. Are the machines which the company uses part of the company's fixed assets or part of its current assets?
Ingabe izinto ezisheziwe yinkampani yingxenywe yamasixhelo noma yingxenywe yamasixhelo?

So the homelands and the immigrant labour ~~system~~ and the reserves are a central part of the economic system which has permitted a great increase in the wealth ^{under} ~~in~~ the control of the whites. Blacks are forced to work for low wages in ~~whites areas~~ the so-called white areas to produce wealth which is owned by whites and which is taxed by the white government to pay essentially for services to whites.

This is what South African politics is about, and this is what the politics of migrant labour is about. It is not about whether ¹ can marry Mr Vorster's daughter or about whether ¹ can eat in a restaurant, or about whether Afrikaans culture will survive. These are just pieces of nonsense which have been invented by white politicians to obscure the real issue. The real issue is whether the whites will continue to monopolise South Africa's resources, and whether they will continue to control the wealth produced in large part by black labour.

It will be obvious from what I have just said that the policy of separate development and independent black bantustans can never solve the problem. The principle of separate development is that the blacks can never have any ~~right~~ right to share in control over the commonly produced wealth of South Africa. Migrant labour and separate development are virtually identical. The white-controlled area will benefit from the productive activity of black workers. The homeland governments will be expected to look after those who are not productive: the children and the old, and the sick. The whites get all the benefits ~~xx~~ with none of the responsibilities.

All but one of the homeland leaders have ^{made it clear} rejected the idea of homeland independence. Most have, like Chief Buthelezi, ^{principle} that they use separate development in practice with the aim of overthrowing it in practice. The institutions of separate development offer a temporary channel through which black leaders can put their demand for a share in power and wealth. But the point is that separate development itself offers no real power. At the meeting with the Prime Minister last month, the homeland leaders could ask for things, but they could not bargain.

Chief Buthelezi warned of the possibility of civil disobedience and disruption of services. This warning must be taken very seriously. It must be remembered that there are already many blacks who are disillusioned with the small gains made so far by the homeland leaders. Blacks have great potential power.

Power can be ^{work} ~~used~~ in one of two ways. Take the example of workers in a factory with the right to strike. They have power and the managers know that they have power. On this basis they can negotiate an agreement without actually having to use that power. But when management refuses to admit that the workers have any power, then they are forced to use it. A recognition of power leads to negotiation. A refusal to recognise power leads to conflict.

QUESTIONS & NOTES/IMIBUZO NAMANOTHI:

1. How much money did the company pay to the shareholders?
Inkampani yabakhokhela malini abaphathi bamashezi?

2. How much tax did the company pay to the government?
Inkampani yakhokha intela engakanani kuhulumeni?

3. How much money did the company save to pay for machinery that was wearing out?
Inkampani yonga malini yokukhokhela umshini owawuguga?

4. This company made an extra profit this year, apart from the ordinary profit from selling its products. Can you see from the Income Statement what that extra profit was, and where it came from?
Lenkampani yenza inzuzo engaphezulu kulonyaka, ngaphandle kwenzuzo ejwayelekile etholakele ngokudayisa umkhicizo wayo. Ungabona kulesitatimente semali engenayo ukuthi leyonzuzo engaphezulu yaba yimalini, nokuthi yaphuma kuphi?

4. The company sold a subsidiary company, and made a profit of R560 180.
Lenkampani yadayisa inkampani eyengamele, yathola inzuzo ka R560 180.

3. Depreciation = 595 043 / Okudlekile = 595 043

2. R323 579

1. R384 800

Answers/Iziphendulo:

Managers cause strikes by refusing to recognise the power of the workers.
Governments cause revolutions by refusing to recognise the power of the people.

I am not trying to say that some sort of total revolution is likely tomorrow. What I am saying is that without any institutions through which bargaining over the issues of power and wealth can take place a society is inherently unstable.

Nobody wants widespread unrest and social conflict. We would all prefer a negotiated settlement. But the possibility of negotiation presupposes a recognition that South Africa is one country in to which all its inhabitants have equal rights. But this means that the system of migrant labour is not just one political issue among many others. It is the core of the whole problem. Migrant labour expresses in the clearest possible way the fact that in South Africa ~~the~~ Africans are not citizens. They are merely objects to be used by whites for their own convenience.

The point is this. Negotiation presupposes a recognition on the part of the white government that blacks have rights in South Africa. But once they recognise this they must at the same time recognise that migrant labour is unacceptable.

So migrant labour is and will remain a central cause of social and political conflict and instability.

I have been invited here to speak as a trade unionist, not as a politician. So I am not going to talk about the problems of political strategy and tactics - facing the black peoples at the moment. Instead I want to conclude by talking about the role of trade unions in the present situation.

Here I want to make two points. The first point is that some people argue that migrant workers are not ready for, or not interested in trade unions. But this is nonsense. A migrant worker is not a farmer who comes to the city for a short time to earn extra cash. A migrant worker is a worker who is forced to return periodically to a small patch of land which can never support him and his family. He is a worker and he has basically the same needs and interests as other workers. Our experience is that migrant contract workers are just as interested in trade unionism as are other workers. The only difference is that they are even more vulnerable than other workers to victimisation by management. But this is scarcely an argument against giving them trade union rights.

The second point I want to make is that a trade union is not a political party. But it is concerned with power. The purpose of a trade union is to give the workers more power in determining what will happen to the wealth which they produce.

This means that while trade unions are not directly concerned with the question of government power, they can play an important part in altering the overall balance of power between the different classes in South Africa. African trade unions may be legally recognised by the state, or they may force employers to recognise them directly. In either case a valuable negotiating channel will have been set up which will ease social tensions. That is, trade union rights can be an important intermediate step in solving the problem of political institutions in South Africa. www

This fact has two important consequences. Firstly, those homeland leaders who are really working for change in South Africa must fully support the trade unions. Secondly, the two main white opposition parties in South Africa both claim to be working towards a shared South Africa. We know that most white businessmen in South Africa support one or the other of these two parties. When we hear these parties calling for change, and yet find their supporters refusing to negotiate with African unions, we begin to doubt the sincerity of these parties themselves. The point is that it is not enough for the United Party and the Progressive Party to call for the law to be changed to recognise African unions. African unions can be recognised immediately, without any change in the law. These parties must campaign to get businessmen to recognise and negotiate with unions immediately.

By doing this the white opposition parties can help to bring about an important change in South Africa now, without waiting for a change in government. They can also ~~display~~ show to black South Africans that they are really sincere in wanting to share power.

To return to the question of migrant labour. I do not suggest that trade unions can by themselves solve the problem of migrant labour. But they can do two things. Firstly through trade union organisation migrant workers can improve their wages and working conditions. The improvements which they can bring about by themselves in this way are much more significant than anything which can be achieved by charity work from outside.

Secondly trade union organisation can help to change the whole political climate and the balance of power in South Africa. Trade unions can change the power relations in the factories. And at the same time they can produce trained and competent working class leaders and organisers who can help to make the trade unions a force in the society as a whole.

Migrant labour is a workers problem. The solution to the politics of migrant labour is intimately connected with the growth of worker organisations.

written by

Richard Turner 1974/5

South Africa's system of forced migrant labour did not grow up by accident; it was created through political action by the white holders of power, and the policy of homeland development they have created cannot hope to solve the political problems of this system.

~~Summary~~

The system originated in the imposition of white control over the whole of South Africa by military conquest. Much of the African's land was taken away from them -- for two reasons -- so that white farmers could have land, and, so that Africans would not have enough land and be forced to work for the whites.

Most Africans did not come into the white areas voluntarily. They were forced to do so by a conscious policy of land alienation and taxation -- development in the white-controlled areas and underdevelopment in the reserves is not produced by white hard work and black laziness.

Richard Tume

$\frac{1}{m} =$ a dash
= a hyphen

THE POLITICS OF MIGRANT LABOUR.

I am not going to spend time talking about the suffering caused by South Africa's system of forced migrant labour. If you do not know about that by now then you are incapable of learning.

This seminar is about the politics of migrant labour. I want to use my 20 mins. to make two points. The first is that the system of migrant labour is not something which grew up by accident. It was created by political action by the white holders of power.

The second point is that the policy of homeland independence cannot hope to solve the political problem of migrant labour.

So I want to begin by talking briefly about the origins and purpose of the system of migrant labour. Some people seem to think that it started as follows: they think that whites came into uninhabited areas of South Africa and developed them. The blacks living in the neighbouring areas saw how nice life was in the developed areas, and they began to stream voluntarily in to look for jobs. Because they are foreigners they naturally cannot expect the same rights as native white South Africans. But anyway they benefit from the privilege of being able to work in the industries created by the whites, and then they can return to live in their own countries.

Now this is of course, nonsense. White control was imposed over the whole of South Africa by military conquest. Much of the Africans land was taken away from them. This was done for two reasons. Firstly it was so that white farmers could have land. But the second reason was just as important. It was done so that the Africans would not have enough land and so would be forced to work for the whites. Most Africans do not come voluntarily into the white areas. They were forced to do so by a conscious policy of land alienation and taxation. Development in the white-controlled areas and underdevelopment in the reserves is not produced by white hard work and black laziness.

And it was not out of kindness that the Africans were left with 13¹/₂ percent of the land, instead of having it all taken away. It had two big advantages for capitalists. The first advantage was that while workers had some land in the reserves they could be paid wages below subsistence level. The reserves were designed in such a way that the men were forced to work, but their families could produce some food in the reserves. Wages could be lower and profits could be higher.

proportionately

there. Because of this

The second advantage was that the system of compounds and pass laws made it easier to control African workers and prevent them from organising trade unions. This also helped to keep down wages. So the homelands and the migrant labour and the reserves are a central part of the economic system which has permitted great increases in the wealth under the control of the whites. Blacks are forced to work for low wages in the so-called white areas to produce wealth which is owned and which is taxed by the white government to pay essentially for services to whites.

This is what South African politics is about, and this is what the politics of migrant labour is about. It is not about whether I can marry Mr Vorster's daughter, or about whether I can eat in a restaurant, or about whether Afrikaans culture will survive. These are just pieces of nonsense which have been invented by white politicians to obscure the real issues. The real issues are whether the whites will continue to monopolise South Africa's resources, and whether they will continue to control the wealth produced in large part by black labour.

It will be obvious from what I have just said that the policy of separate development and independent black bantustans can never solve the problem. The principle of separate development is that the blacks can never have any right to share in the control over the commonly produced wealth of South Africa. Migrant labour and separate development are virtually identical. The white-controlled area will benefit from the productive activity of black workers. The homeland governments will be expected to look after those who are not productive: the children and the old and the sick. The whites get all the benefits with none of the responsibilities.

All but one of the homeland leaders have rejected the idea of homeland independence. Most have, like Chief Buthelezi made it clear that they use separate development in practice with the aim of overthrowing it in principle. They claim that institutions of separate development offer a temporary channel through which black leaders can put their demand for a share in power and wealth. But the point is that separate development itself offers no real power. At the meeting with the Prime Minister last month, the homeland leaders could ask for things, but they could not bargain.

Chief Buthelezi warned of the possibility of civil disobedience and disruption of services. This warning must be taken very seriously. It must be remembered that there are already many blacks who are disillusioned with the small gains made so far by the homeland leaders.

Blacks have great potential power. Power can work in one of two ways. Take the example of workers in a factory with the right to strike. They have power and the managers know that they have power. On this basis they can negotiate an agreement without actually having to use that power. But when management refuse to admit that the workers have any power, then they are forced to use it. A recognition of power leads to negotiation. A refusal to recognise power leads to conflict.

Managers cause strikes by refusing to recognise the power of the workers. Governments cause revolutions by refusing to recognise the power of the people.

~~I am not trying to say~~ ^{Not} that some sort of total revolution is likely tomorrow, but what I am trying to say is that without any institutions through which bargaining over the issues of power and wealth can take place, a society is inherently unstable.

Nobody wants widespread unrest and social conflict. We would all prefer a negotiated settlement. But the possibility of negotiation presupposes a recognition that South Africa is one country to which all its inhabitants have equal rights. But this means that the system of migrant labour is not just one political issue among many others. It is the core of the whole problem. Migrant labour expresses in the clearest possible way, the fact that South African Africans are not citizens in South Africa. They are merely objects to be used by whites for their own convenience.

~~The point is this. Negotiation presupposes a recognition on the part of the white government that blacks have rights in South Africa. But once they recognise~~ ^{black rights} ~~this~~ they must at the same time recognise that migrant labour is unacceptable. So migrant labour is and will remain a central cause of social and political conflict and instability. ^{the white government}

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Migrant labour is a workers' problem and the solution to the politics of migrant labour is intimately connected with the growth of worker organisations.

Some people argue that migrant workers are not ready for, or not interested in, trade unions. This is nonsense. A migrant worker....

Trade unions by themselves cannot solve the problem of migrant labour, but through trade union organisation the workers can improve their wages and working conditions. The improvements they can bring about for themselves in this way are far more significant ~~than~~ gains than anything which can be achieved by charity work from outside.

....

Trade unions are not political parties....

This has two important consequences....

And, the two main white opposition parties....

By doing this the white opposition parties....

Trade union organisation can help to change the whole political climate and balance of power in South Africa. Trade unions can change the power relations in the factories and at the same time they can produce trained and competent working class leaders and organisers who can help make trade unions ~~are~~ a force in society as a whole.

ends

What is the role of trade unions in this situation?

Some

~~I want to make 1 point.~~ The first point is that ~~some~~ people argue that migrant workers are not ready for, or not interested in, trade unions. ~~But~~ this is nonsense. A migrant worker is not a farmer who comes to the city for a short time to earn extra cash. A migrant worker is a worker who is forced to return periodically to a small patch of land which can never support him and his family. He is a worker and ~~he~~ has basically the same needs and interests as other workers. Our experience is that migrant contract workers are just as interested in trade unionism as are other workers. The only difference is that they ~~are~~ even more ~~vulnerable~~ ^{are vulnerable} than other workers, to victimization by management. But this is scarcely an argument against giving them ~~some~~ trade union rights.

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~~The second point I want to make is that a trade union is not a political party.~~ ^{parties,} But ~~it is~~ ^{they are} concerned with power. ~~The~~ ^{their} purpose of a trade union is to give the workers more power in determining what will happen to the wealth they produce. This means that while trade unions are not directly concerned with the question of government power, they can play an important part in altering the ~~overall~~ ^{overall} balance of power between the different classes in South Africa. ^{African} trade unions ~~might~~ ^{might} be legally recognised by the state, or they ~~may~~ ^{might} force employers to recognise them directly. In either case a valuable negotiating channel will have been set up which will ease social tensions. ~~That is~~ trade union rights can be an important intermediate step in solving the problem of political institutions in South Africa.

This ~~fact~~ has two important consequences. First, those homeland leaders who are really working for change in South Africa must fully support the trade unions.

~~And~~ ^{And} the two main white opposition parties in South Africa both claim to be working towards a shared South Africa. We know that most white businessmen in South Africa ~~do~~ support one or the other of these ~~two~~ parties. When we hear these parties calling for change, and yet find their supporters refusing to negotiate with African trade unions, we begin to doubt the sincerity of these parties themselves. ~~The point is that it is not enough for the United Party and the Progressive Party to call for the law to be changed.~~ ~~to recognise African trade unions.~~ ~~African trade unions must be recognised immediately, without any change in the law.~~ These parties must campaign to get businessmen to R negotiate with ~~the~~ ^{Black} unions immediately, ^{without any change in the law}

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HAROLD B. NXASANA.

Institute for Industrial Education

4, February 1974.

Richard Tones