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Class Consciousness among Colonised Workers in South Africa

Many pitfalls surround the concepts class and class consciousness. A major problem is that one school of thought takes for granted the utility of "class" analysis, while another school tends to dismiss it out of hand as "ideological". As a result a debate on the actual role of such an analysis does not really occur, which is bad for both sides. Those using such an analysis often neglect to refine their tools, and those opposed to it never come to understand the issues involved. For this reason I shall beging, at the risk of repeating the obvious, by attempting to state in very general terms what I believe a class analysis is designed to do. Roughly, I shall suggest that a class analysis starts from the recognition of the existence within a society of structurally imposed inequalities, and that the problem then becomes one of explaining how those inequalities are maintained, and how they are perceived by those who either do or do not benefit from them. From this question I shall develop a schematic account of the various elements which go to make up "class consciousness". I shall then discuss in general terms the peculiarities which may or may not characterise the working class in the specific situation of colonist dominated societies in which migrant labour is widespread. Finally, I shall give a brief account of the Durban strikes, and attempt to draw some conclusions about class consciousness among colonised workers in Durban in particular and in South Africa in general.

Individuals act in terms of certain sets of ideas, beliefs and assumptions which I shall term their "consciousness". A given social structure persists partly because the individuals in it have acquired suitable consciousness through socialisation, and partly because deviant behaviour is sanctioned by the use of force. Any social system persists, therefore, on the basis of some mixture of force and "consensus". I place inverted commas round consensus to stress that it must not be confused with rational agreement as to the desirability of the system in question. Consciousness can be "false consciousness", in the sense that it misunderstands the real nature of the situation. This should raise the difficult epistemological problem of the criteria for recognising a true consciousness. However, although I shall suggest some such criteria, I intend to avoid the epistemological problem by suggesting that one can quite well recognise certain consciousnesses as being false even when not equipped with criteria which could guarantee the distinction in all circumstances.

If stability is ensured by a mixture of force and consensus, then the study of any society will involve three different moments:

1) It is necessary to determine to what extent the social system is based on genuine consensus as a function of true consciousness;
2) Then it is necessary to estimate to what extent the system allocates rewards in such a way that there is potential conflict masked by false consciousness, and also to investigate the way in which this false consciousness is propagated;
3) Finally, it is necessary to analyse the role played by power and the perceptions or misperceptions of power relationships in the society.

I suggest, again without having the time to justify the point adequately, that consensus flowing from true consciousness will exist when the system distributes rewards in a way which is understood by all members, and is accepted as fair by all members. This is, of course, very vague. Runciman has suggested a more precise conceptualisation: "We should ask, in assessing the merits of rival claims, what criteria of assessment would have been established by rational persons if we could suppose them to have been required to agree, from a state of primordial equality, on principles by which they would be prepared to make claims and to concede them". (Runciman p 252). This is an elegant statement of principle, but it is also very difficult to operationalise, since rewards are qualitatively as well as quantitatively different. An individual within a given situation may be able to decide on the optimum mix of material rewards, effort, prestige, leisure and cultural freedom, which suit him or her best. But one cannot say from outside how these different types of costs and benefits should be weighed in attempting to establish criteria for a society. Because of this, it is difficult to establish final criteria

in terms of which to distinguish between false and true consciousness. But it is also obvious that this remains a purely academic question when the societies with which we have to deal plainly have a highly unequal distribution of all costs and benefits. The moralist is faced with the problem of trying to bring about a more just distribution. The sociologist is faced with the problem of why the exploited members of the system do not alter the distribution themselves.

If we conceive of a society as a system for the production and distribution of benefits at the expense of costs, then, insofar as it is a system, there will be individuals sharing equivalent positions within the system, and hence facing similar problems. In our societies the distribution of costs and benefits of nearly all kinds is associated with the pattern of ownership of the means of production. Since the means of production are unequally owned, so is everything else unequal.

In a society in which there is exploitation resulting from inequality of access to the means of production, what makes the exploited become, or prevents them from becoming, conscious of the nature of their exploitation, and able to act to do something about it? I shall define "class" to refer to all those individuals who have similar positions in the system of production and distribution of costs and benefits or, to use Giddens' term, all those who have similar "market capacities". (Giddens p 103) (It is not all that easy to establish criteria for "similarity", but the definition is adequate for my present broad purpose). Because they occupy similar positions in the system, they have similar problems or lack of problems, and this is why it is useful to treat of them collectively. Because they share similar problems/advantages which result from the nature of the social system, they also have common interest in the change or preservation of the system, although they may well not be aware of this common interest. That is, associated with the concept class is the concept class consciousness. Sometimes theorists write as though class consciousness is something which you either have or have not. But this is very misleading. In fact there are many different ways and many different levels on which one can become conscious of one's position as a member of an exploited or exploiting class. Using suggestions made by Giddens and by Mann we can analytically distinguish at least six different "levels" of class consciousness:

1) A set of beliefs shared in common with the other members of the class, but without any necessary awareness that these are the shared beliefs of a class.

2) An awareness of common class interest.

3) A more precise conceptualisation of class identity, and hence of differentiation from other classes.

4) A consciousness of a conflict of interests with other classes (class opposition).

5) A consciousness of what Mann calls "class totality - the acceptance of the two previous elements (3 & 4) as the defining characteristics of
   a) one's total social situation, and
   b) the whole society in which one lives". (p 13)

6) A concept of an alternative society to be reached through struggle with one's opponent.

Mann suggests that "revolutionary class consciousness" combines elements 3 to 6. That is, what one might describe as full class consciousness of an exploited class involves the awareness among all members of a class of the fact that they belong to a class which is in conflict with another class, that the nature of the conflict derives in certain ways from the overall structure of the society, and that the problem can only be resolved by creating a new social structure through the class struggle itself.

This seems to involve at least 5 different dimensions:

1) We may say that the individual is objectively deprived, but to what extent does he or she perceive this deprivation? This is the problem of relative deprivation on the individual level.

2) To what extent does the individual who feels deprived perceive a community of interest with other individuals.

3) To what extent does the individual understand the situation in structural terms?

4) To what extent does the individual perceive him/herself or the group as having the power to change the situation?

5) To what extent is an alternative society conceived or conceivable?

The first 4 dimensions involve answers to the following questions: To what extent am I exploited? With whom am I exploited? Here I might see myself as only an individual, or identify with a group like the fellow workers in a factory (see Beynon's concept of "factory class consciousness") or with members of a certain race, or with all members of my class.

By what mechanisms am I exploited? Here I might see all or only some of the total politico-economic system which enables certain individuals to exploit me.

Each of these dimensions is partly dependent on the nature of the system, and partly dependent on consciousness of the nature of the system. The nature of the system determines the level of deprivation, the existence of others with similar problems, the potential power of the class, and the range of possible alternatives. But becoming conscious along each of these 5 dimensions may depend on different factors in each case. Each factor

involves both the individual per se, and the individual in interaction with others, and the nature of this interaction will be very complex. There is sometimes the tendency to think immediately of a class as a single actor, and thereby to confuse the problem of individual consciousness with the question of the extension of group solidarity.

The point of all the above remarks is to stress that the question of class consciousness is an exceedingly complex one. Because fully developed class consciousness involves so many different dimensions and levels it is effected by many different aspects of the social structure, both in its history and in its present articulation. For each individual the present is always mediated by history as embodied in consciousness, as values, assumptions and beliefs, and this fact will effect every aspect of the development of class consciousness.

Because class consciousness is so complex, it is also very difficult to measure. How do you actually tell how "conscious" a given "class" is? One way might be to conduct an opinion poll of some sort. But there are two serious problems with such an approach. The first problem is that it is technically very difficult to get unambiguous responses. This is because a particular question is always answered within the context of a particular horizon of possibilities. To evaluate the answer you need also to grasp the particular horizon of possibilities, and it is very difficult to do this, in part because the respondent him/herself might find it very difficult to articulate. If a respondent says that she is satisfied with a particular situation, in terms of what set of aspirations, and what range of perceived possibilities is she making the judgement? Unless we know these things we cannot predict how she will behave in a changed situation. Her answer may represent a highly dissatisfied consciousness, repressed by the apparent total absence of channels of action, and unable to verbalise itself. This is illustrated particularly in the case of wildcat strikes, where some incident suddenly permits this consciousness to crystallise, often in very radical forms. The Goldthorpe and Lockwood study of Vauxhall (The Affluent Worker), which turned up nothing which could predict the strike which broke out there shortly afterwards, is a famous example of this. How, actually, could they have discovered, somewhere in the workers' consciousness, the potential for such a strike? Probably only by creating the preconditions for the strike itself to occur.

This indicates the second problem in the opinion poll approach. The strike, like any other class action, is a collective act. The kinds of action covered by the term "class struggle" occur within an ongoing process and express a consciousness which perhaps cannot even be examined outside of that process, except when it has become embodied in a specific and articulate theory. It is probable that it is always only a minority who are going to articulate their ends and means in some such clear way. This cannot entitle us to conclude that the rest do not have some form of action-oriented class consciousness.

The problem of collective action is illuminated by Sartre's distinction between the "group" and the "series". Sartre points out that, within capitalist societies at least, social structures depend for their opacity on the separation between the individuals whose behaviour constitutes the structures. In this state of separation each individual is powerless to effect the total structure, which is, however, only sustained in existence by the summation of the acts of each separate individual. Each individual can only change the system by cooperating with the other individuals. Dut there seems to be no way of initiating such cooperation unless it already exists. Any step I take depends on the reaction of the others, and because I am separate from the others I have no control over how they will react to my attempt at cooperation. Hence I have a sense of powerlessness. This is the description of a series. As a serial individual I will always act in terms of this fundamental sense of powerlessness. The problem is to break through from this impotent serial praxis to group praxis, in which my relation to the other is a source of strenght rather than of weakness. Sartre suggests that this change from serial to group praxis is never purely the result of theorising. It requires a situation which suddenly illuminates the possibilities of action for a large number of people. This produces a rapid and radical change in consciousness, simply because a whole range of alternatives which were previously closed off suddenly at least seem to have become available. Any class situation has to be analysed also in terms of the relation between group and serial practice, both in general, and in that particular situation. One has to ask to what extent members of a particular class are serialised, what mechanisms keep them in that state, and what factors, if any, might encourage the formation of a group.

It is extraordinarily difficult to uncover the exact role of serialisation within an individual's consciousness by interviews within a serial situation. By these criticisms I do not mean to deny the usefulness of interview research. It can provide useful information, as long as one bears these limitations in mind. The problem is that most of this kind of research does not usually do this, and therefore mystifies the question. We can only make judgements about class consciousness on the basis of an analysis of the objective situation, the history of the classes, and a close description of what is actually happening in the society. This can be supplemented by interview techniques, as long as these are very carefully designed.

I have defined "class" in purely objective terms, so that it can apply to a situation where there is no consciousness of class at all. The term is useful in such a situation because it can reveal a situation of exploitation and lead us to ask why that situation is not perceived, or is misperceived. In this perspective South Africe can be treated purely as a class society, that is, as a system in which different individuals have differential access to the means of production and distribution of costs and benefits. The only way to show that South Africa is not a class society would be by showing that different individuals (members of different ethnic groups) have different value systems which are in fact

all satisfied (i.e. that blacks enjoy factory work, migrant labour, and have limited material needs.) This argument has been tried before now, and would at least deserve investigation if South Africa were genuinely a dual economy. But it is not. Even if blacks are satisfied with an uneven distribution of benefits, they are not likely to be satisfied with the uneven distribution of costs which results from the industrial system in which they provide the hard labour.

This means that we can say that South Africa is a class society in which exploitation is based on differential access to the means of production. We can then ask to what extent the members of the various classes in presence are conscious of the situation in class terms. "Race" could be dealt with in one of two ways. It might be decided that racial differences constitute a quite independent source of conflict which has become more alient than conflict over other costs and rewards. Or it might be decided that the significance of race difference lies in the extent to which it has served as a legitimating ideology for the exploiting classes, and the extent to which it clarifies or confuses the development of class consciousness amongst the exploited classes.

One problem with defining a class as being all those individuals who have a similar relation to the means of production is that it is difficult to establish criteria for what is to count as "similarity". This is complicated by the problem of giving an account of what is meant to be a "relation" to the means of production. This is normally interpreted in terms of ownership or non-ownership. But ownership is an economic and legal category. Its meaning in a particular society is mediated by the politico-legal institutions and the actual relations of power within the society. In an important sense you own a thing to the extent that you have power over it, and such power virtually is never absolute. "Property" is a set of "rights" or "powers", and these rights can be disaggregated and distributed in odd ways. So there may be a variety of different forms of "ownership" and "non-ownership". The significance of this for an analysis of class in South Africa, is that it justifies treating the white working class (more properly, the colonist working class) as a separate class with its own distinctive relation to the means of production, based on political power and institutionalised rights over the product, embodied in the Industrial Council system. We can distinguish between three main classes: colonist-capitalist; colonist-workers; colonised-workers. The relation between these three classes, and other minor classes, such as colonised capitalist, needs further analysis, but we cannot assume a priori that there is a possibility of community of interest between colonist-workers and colonised-workers.

In this essay I am concerned mainly with the colonised-workers. To what extent do members of this group exhibit class-consciousness? I cannot answer this question in any rigorous way. Instead I shall look at some of the arguments which are advanced to suggest that for structural reasons the colonised-workers in South Africa are not likely to develop class consciousness. Then I shall consider the specific historical and cultural factors which would affect the growth of class consciousness. Finally I shall make some judgements based on observations of working class activity in South Africa over the last few years.

Most of the studies that have been undertaken in Africa are vitiated for our purposes by the fact that they have either been almost entirely concerned with "urbanisation", or, to the extent that they have investigated the work situation, have done so from a management perspective, being concerned with such issues as turn-over and the improvement of training, (e.g., Van der Horst, Elkan). But urbanisation, defined by Van Velsen as "a condition in which the African has given up his loyalty to his tribe and his continued dependence on the economic and social system of his tribe, and has become, as an individual and no longer through membership of his tribe, a citizen of the larger state which now contains his tribe", is distinct from what I shall describe as "proletarianisation". I shall use this term to refer to the acquisition of attitudes and behaviour pattern in the work-place which are typical of wage-workers elsewhere. The distinction between urbanisation and proletarianisation is justified for two reasons. Firstly, South African legislation is such as to discourage urbanisation in the above sense. People may be dependent on the rural areas, and on landrights in the tribal economy, when they are also fullycommitted to a life as industrial workers. Secondly, most investigators have either concluded, or felt it safe to assume, that there is a process of "alternation" in which african workers take on proletarian characteristics when in the work situation, but maintain rural culture in the rural situation. Epstein, for example, explains the failure of the "tribal elder" system on the copperbelt by pointing out that the prestige of the tribal elders "did not apply in those situations where africans were involved as workers rather than as tribesmen. Tribal values were irrelevant here, because such situations as a dispute over wages involved a different set of relations, and a different set of interests. The ties which linked africans in these situations cut across those very divisions in which the system of tribal representation was rooted". (p 100). The migrant worker is a worker, and is as available for what Clarke calls "union-type activity" as is any other worker, all other things being equal.

The only evidence to the contrary refers to very short term migrants studied by Elkan in Uganda. This short-term migrant "regards himself as transitory and does not care overmuch about the conditions under which he works. As he does not expect promotion for himself, he shows no concern for the method of selection to better jobs or the differentials in the wage scale". (Elkan 1 p 23-4) The migrants to whom he refers are those who work for periods of about 6 months, and do not expect to return. Eventhese, however, are presumable concerned with their own wage levels, and working conditions if they affect survival, as is born out by Van Onselen's study of early workes on the Rhodesian mines, where from the beginning workers carefully selected employers in terms of income and safety criteria. In South Africa some of the best organised strikes have been undertaken by migrant miners, and migrant contract workers played an important part in the Durban strikes.

The only reason for assuming that migrancy was an important factor inhibiting the growth of class consciousness would perhaps be if the motives bringing migrants to work in town were of a special kind which would lead them to react in a special way to the work situation. For example, Schapera's study of migration from Botswana has often been cited as evidence for the proposition that migrants come to town for the excitement and as part of their initiation into manhood. In discussing causes, Schapera mentions these two, and then goes on to mention: the fact that girls prefer men who have had some experience of town life, the boredom of tribal life, the desire to escape from domestic or tribal

control, and the desire for independence of members of former serf groups in tribal society. Finally he mentions "economic necessity". He then gives the results of 297 interviews, in which 291 respondents mention economic causes and 6 (six) give other reasons, such as those listed above. Thus he shows that the overwhelming reason for migration is economic, and this is born out by other studies, as well as intuitively. Moreover, the economic motivation no longer seems to be limited to certain target amounts. Glass uses her research into african motivation for the NIPR to conclude that "Accumulation of wealth and the acquisition of possessions are highly acceptable values. The range of material possessions is almost without exception that of modern society: cars, refrigerators, electricity, money in the bank, being well-dressed, owning a house and furniture, and living in comfort. A few men sigh for "cattle and land from which to feed my family". Though, in addition they still desire the symbols of contemporary society. In fact, the most rurally-oriented man wanted all these possessions - and more - within the setting of the rural home". (Glass p 15). On the whole, therefore, it seems reasonable to agree with Allen that "the migrant nature of the labour force is relevant in understanding social behaviour only in that it influences the actual form that behaviour takes. It is not the determinant of that behaviour". (Allen 187).

Thus there seems to be no reason to treat migrancy as a structural factor inhibiting the development of working class consciousness. But a number of writers have stressed the great importance of tradition in determining the actual form which working class consciousness takes in any given society. (e.g. Thompson, Mann). Here the combination between migrancy and the relative recency of industrialisation might be significant. As regards length of industrial experience, there are two opposing hypotheses. The first is that the new proletarian tends to be oriented towards the past, and towards the recovery of the status of an independent producer. Deutscher quotes the following analysis by Djugashvili of such a situation: "Imagine a shoemaker who had a tiny workshop, but could not stand the competition of big business. That shoemaker closed his workshop and hired himself, say, to Adelkhanov, at the Tiflis shoe factory. He came to Adelkhanov's factory not to remain a worker for ever, but to save some money, to lay aside a small capital and then to reopen his own workshop. As you see, the position of that shoemaker is ALREADYthat of a proletarian, but his consciousness is NOT YET proletarian, but petty-bourgeois through and through". (Deutscher p 4). Similarly, Thompson comments on early proletarians in England, "If the agricultural labourers pined for land, the artisans aspired to an 'independence'. (Thompson 289). Migrant and recently industrialised workers might conceive of a perhaps impossible alternative society of independent small-scale producers, along Proudhonist lines. This would perhaps affect the nature of their demands and also the nature of their organisation. In a situation of real or imagined easy upward mobility it might prevent any collective consciousness or collective action from emerging.

The alternative hypothesis stresses the phenomenon which Leggett describes as "uprootedness". It is argued that recently proletarianised workers are much more likely to develop militancy and a revolutionary consciousness than are workers with a tradition of several generations of urbanisation.

Leggett cites his own research in Detroit in 1960, which shows that recently proletarianised Poles and Negroes have a higher level of "class consciousness" than do those workers born in the industrial area. He also refers to a study in Finland, and to Trotzky's account of the origins of the Russian revolution, where he writes, 'Moreover, in Russia the proletariat did not arise gradually through the ages, carrying with itself the burden of the past as in England, but in leaps involving sharp changes of environment, ties, relations, and a sharp break with the past. It is just this fact - combined with the concentrated oppressions of tzarism - that made the Russian workers hospitable to the boldest conclusions of revolutionary thought". (Trotzky p 11). A study by Rimmer gives evidence of immigrant Indian workers in a british factory who are much more militant trade unionists than their english colleaques. Mann cites further evidence on uprootedness and radical attitudes, but also cites a study of German workers which shows a disproportionate prevalence of conservative attitudes in recent immigrants from rural areas. (Mann 40).

There are four possible explanations for the correlation between uprootedness and militancy:

1) New workers have fewer skills and thus get the worst jobs, and can be most easily exploited. Having migrated to improve their standard of living, they generally have unrealistic expectations, and the high level of relative deprivation which results from the combination of these high expectations and the fact of extreme exploitation makes them more militant. (see Leggett ch 5).

2) Many migrants come from rural areas where the level of class conflict is very high. Landlords impose very strict control and there are no institutionalised outlets for grievances. When they reach the industrial milieu they have already acquired very hostile "class" attitudes towards property-owners, and these find ready militant expression in the new forms of organisation, the political party and the trade union, which the migrants find in the industrial cities. (see Leggett). The suggestion that level of militancy is partly a function of the situation in the rural areas could be used to explain the exceptions, such as the study of German workers referred to above.

3) An alternative explanation would be that the new worker comes into a social environment characterised by new forms of authority and control, which are not legitimised by the traditional culture. (see Bendix). To a certain extent this conflicts with Leggetts explanation in terms of high class conflict in the rural areas. On the other hand, if we consider the various dimensions of class conflict, it may be that the lack of traditional legitimation breaks down one of the forms of internalised control which have dampened down the conflict in the rural areas. Thompson quotes an address to the public of strike-bound Manchester by "A Journey man cotton-spinner" in 1818, and comments, "What his address does is to itemize one after another the grievances felt by working poeple as to changes in the character of capitalist exploitation: the rise of a master-class without traditional authority or obligations;

the growing distance between master and man; the transparency of the exploitation at the source of their new wealth and power; the loss of status and above all of independence for the worker, his reduction to total dependence on the master's instruments of production; the partiality of the law; the disruption of the traditional family economy; the discipline, monotony, hours and conditions of work; loss of leisure and amenities; the reduction of the man to the status of an 'instrument'." (Thompson 221 - 2). All these aspects would normally characterise the experience of the new worker, although in varying degrees. Perhaps the most important is the extent of the transparency of the exploitation. In a given society, is the nature of the system of exploitation more or less transparent to the new industrial worker than to those with long experience?

4) Associated with this is the possibility that workers who are new to the wage-system, particularly if they come from a sector characterised either by independent production, or by relatively cooperative tribal-peasant agriculture, are likely to have more of an idea of an alternative society. Industrial capitalism does not present itself with quite the same air of inevitability as it does to the worker who has known no other system. Of course the particular form which this vision of an alternative takes may not in fact be viable. But it would certainly weaken the legitimacy of the given, and perhaps also provide the basis for the formulation of a viable alternative.

From the above discussion we can conclude that there is no reason to assume a priori that the migrant or the recent industrial worker will show a lower level of class consciousness than other workers. Indeed, if anything, the assumption should probably be in the opposite direction, unless the process of expulsion from the land has been so traumatic as to produce complete apathy and atomisation. Apart from the question of migrancy, there are five further general points which should be considered as possibly having a bearing on the formation of "class consciousness" by South Africa's workers: the traditional attitudes to employers; the significance of "tribal" divisions; the extent and nature of stratification within the proletariat; the nature of the dominant legitimating ideology in South Africa; and the historical fact of resistance to conquest.

1) Traditional attitudes to work and to employers

According to Banton, referring to the Congo, "In tribal law, an employer and a worker who accepted his offer entered into partnership; the employer was regarded as a somewhat special kind of clan chief and therefore had the chiefly functions of benefactor, guardian, and protector". (Banton p 241). In South Africa an african personnel manager has recently claimed that this continues to be the case, and that if employers recognise the obligations which flow from this, then they will have no further labour problems. Of course if this is true, then it will have implications for the nature and development of class consciousness. But in fact there is no reason to believe that this attitude has survived beyond the earliest experience of capitalist employers. As Elkan points out from his experience in Uganda, the persistence of strikes is incompatible with this "in loco parentis" type of argument. (Elkan 1 p 49).

2) "Tribal" divisions

If tribal division persists into the industrial environment, and has higher salience than class divisions, then there is little likelihood of full class consciousness developing. Tamarkin has made a useful distinction between "tribal identity" and "tribal chauvinism". On the evidence of their studies on the copperbelt both Epstein and Mitchell conclude, as Mitchell puts it, that "tribalism does not form the basis for the organisation of corporate groups. It remains essentially a category of interaction in casual social intercourse". (Mitchell). If this is true, then it may still have significance within a workers' organisation, but as a dependent rather than as an independent variable. (see Sklar p 6). Grillo, Mafeje and Sklar all argue that tribal identity only turns into tribal chauvinism when it becomes an issue used by individuals in their struggle for power within a new elite. From his analysis of conflicts within the Railway African Union (Uganda) Grillo concludes: "The RAU (U) is but one of many institutions through which the social aspirations of this group (educated clerical workers) are expressed. Possession of office in the Union gives prestige, power and influence and can, moreover, be used as a basis for a move into yet more important areas of the society, into politics on the one hand, or into management on the other. The suggestion that behind their manoeuvrings lies a 'basically tribal rivalry' implies that those who compete for office do so, in part at any rate, from some notion of group interest, the group being the tribe. Yet it seems to me that it is not axiomatic that a desire to bring advantage to a certain sector of the community such as a tribe plays a fundamental part in the motivation of those who compete for office in the RAU (U)". (Grillo p 317). Because this is a struggle for power within the new institutional structure it is not usually aimed at replacing the class organisation with a tribal arganisation, but rather with manipulating tribal identity in order to gain position within the class organisation, whether it be the state as an organ of the ruling class in Africa, or the trade union as an organ of the working class. This does mean, of course, that "tribalism" in this sense could be a factor which weakens worker solidarity within worker organisation, and it is on this level that we must try to assess its consequences.

3) Stratification within the proletariat

I have already suggested that it is legitimate to treat the colonist working class as a separate class, with its own distinctive relation to the means of production. We may say that what had its origin as a skilled stratum within the working class, typically in conflict both with employers and with unskilled workers who threatened its positions through their potential acquisition of skills, and through the potential for job fragmentation which they represented. This stratum was able to use its political position as part of the colonist conquerors to gain certain "property rights" or "market capacities" which set it apart from the rest of the proletariat. There is at present no possibility of a similar class arising from within the colonised working class (although it is Progressive Party policy to foster such a class), but nevertheless there may be similar

conflicts of interest. Grillo (p 308), Elkan (1 p 25), Burawoy, and Epstein have all drawn attention to the potential conflict of interest between those whose interest lies in the establishment of the principle of the rate for the job for equal work done by colonists and colonised, and those whose interest lies in the overall improvement of wages and conditions. The skilled and the professionals do not feel themselves so much exploited by the wage system as such, as by the discrimination practised within the wage system. Their opposition may well be along different lines from that of unskilled and semiskilled workers, and in some cases this difference may lead to conflict, as in the case documented by Epstein, in which trade union leaders drawn largely from among clerical and skilled workers accepted an "advancement" programme which satisfied their aspirations but not those of the mass of the unskilled members. (Epstein p 146). Kuper and Mitchell have analysed more general stratification in the colonised group as a whole, in which relatively small differences of education and income can become the basis for stratification in terms of prestige. In the special case of personnel managers, Burawoy has shown that their is a sharp perception on the part of workers of the real interests of Zambian personnel managers. He quotes one worker saying, "Once they have been given a big house in town they are happy and forget about the workers. People like personnel officers are useless for employees. They are jealous of their fellow Zambians, fearing that their jobs may be taken over if many Zambians are promoted". (Burawoy p 75). It is also possible to cite examples where the first target for violence during labour conflicts have been the houses and the persons of those colonised who are seen as having joined management (eg. Epstein p 88).

Thus there may well be both a process of stratification and a consciousness of division of interest within the colonised working class. In South Africa this could be complicated by ethnic divisions between coloured and indian workers, on one hand, and african workers on the other. If, as seems to be the case, coloured and indian workers are more likely to be skilled or clerical workers, then there is the possibility that they might attempt to repeat, in some way, the successful action of the skilled colonist workers. There is some evidence of this, for example in the apparent lack of enthusiasm of some coloured and indian trade unions for the development of strong african trade unions. I have been informed that the only Tucsa union which voted against a resolution calling on the government to grant full trade union rights to african workers, was a small all-coloured craft union. But apart from this, those Tucsa unions made up predominantly of coloured and indian workers have given as little practical assistance as have the predominantly colonist unions in Tucsa. In the one case in which the Secretary of one of these unions cooperated closely in the formation of african unions, she has since resigned as a result of the obstacles placed in her way by her executive. However, it is important not to deduce immediately that this is a "racial" issue. It may be better explicable in term of the reaction by an entrenched bureaucracy to a perceived threat to its own situation, rather than to a threat to the member of the Union. I shall return to a discussion of this point after an account of the strikes

One other element of division among the colonised as a whole should be briefly considered here. It has been widely suggested that in most African countries the industrial workers constitute something of an "aristocracy of labour". Gluckmann has suggested that this is also true in South Africa, and that "urban workers come to have interests in conflict with those of poorer Africans from the rural areas trying to press into the industrial economy". (Gluckmann p 152). However, on the basis of a study in Northern Nigeria Hinchcliffe suggests that the idea of a rural-urban split may be a fallacy (Hinchcliffe p 67), and Allen reaches the following conclusion for Africa as a whole: "Because of the similarity of the objective economic position of wage labourers and peasants, and because of the two-way migration, there is an interaction between the two activities. Both are within the ambit of capitalist pressures, and are subject to the dynamics of the prime contradiction in the capitalist system, which has a different initial impact on each activity". (Allen p 183). In Hinchcliffe's area he found the rural standard of living appeared to be higher than in the cities, and Cohen cites further evidence to this effect. Admittedly, this is almost certainly not true for South Africa. However, in South Africa the proletariat is not a small stratum. It is a large and exploited class, kept, through migrancy, in close touch with the peasantry. Under these circumstances, Allen's conclusion is perhaps more likely to be true than is Gluckmann's.

4) The Dominant Ideology

It is often assumed that the main characteristic of the dominant ideology in South Africa is racialism, in either its baasskap or separate development forms. If this is the case, then it is relatively unlikely that this ideology would be successfully internalised by the out-groups stigmatised as inferior of different. I do not mean thereby to suggest that no blacks could accept such an ideology; there are certainly black equivalents of Britain's "deferential Conservatives", accepting the white colonist's right to rule. But on the whole racialism is a crude type of theory which cannot be so easily internalised by the colonised as can other ruling class ideologies. Racial theories can even serve to increase the solidarity of the colonised. Legget uses the term "class-race" consciousness to refer to those who see themselves as belonging to an economically exploited group (a class), which they nevertheless define in racial terms. He concludes that in Detroit race difference is the most important determinant of class consciousness, in that the marginal Negro workers are much more likely to use class as well as race terms in defining their position. Giddens has referred to Leggett's conclusions in suggesting a general theory to the effect that under certain circumstances ethnicity offers a very strong source of what he calls "class structuration", the formation of a self-conscious class (see Giddens p 111 - 112).

However, to concentrate on racism is to ignore another important component of the colonist ideology. This is what I shall term "Victorian Christianity". The early missionaries did not only teach a particular metaphysic. They also did their best to inculcate a particular way of life which bears no necessary relationship to biblical christianity. This way of life embodied three important principles: the "dignity of labour" as an end in itself;

the importance of obedience to constituted authority; and economic individualism. Thompson has given an account of the role of Methodism in disciplining the workforce during the early period of industrialisation in England. It is probably that a detailed study would show that this Victorian Christianity played a similar role in South Africa. Both Reader and Vilakazi have shown the way in which christianity "westernised" the Zulu; here the term "westernised" refers to the inculcation of the values of the dominant class in the capitalist societies from which the missionaries came. (see Reader p 71, 338; Vilakazi p 118 - 122). It may well be that the possessive individualism resulting from this Victorian Christianity is such as, on the one hand, to encourage obedience and deference, and on the other hand to encourage a hope for material salvation through the kind of individual mobility refered to by Djugashvili in his story of the shoe-maker.

The division between christian and non-christian was an important factor in the original conquest, with christians often fighting on the side of the colonist against their heathen fellow-colonised, or at least, as in the case of the 1906 rebellion, remaining neutral (Marks p 332, 334). Mayer suggests that, in the case of the so-called "red" Xhosa migrants, "The sense of patriotic opposition to white people has been extended to cover those 'renegade' Xhosa (i.e. school and town people) who are held to have aligned themselves with the white man". (Mayer p 291). From this perspective one might expect the more traditionally-oriented migrants, who have notswallowed the ideology of the colonists through the school system and victorian christianity, to be more likely to develop "revolutionary" class consciousness.

5) The Historical Tradition of Resistance

The present social structure in South Africa was brought into being by conquest. There must presumably be an oral tradition of the time before the conquest and the primary resistance to conquest. Exploitation resulting from conquest is unusually transparent. To the extent that there is a memory of this process of conquest, and an understanding of its relation to present-day explanation, this could be expected to influence the development of class consciousness. Unfortunately I do not know of any contemporary studies of this oral tradition in relation to the interpretation of current events.

From this discussion of some of the literature dealing with the question of the formation of an industrial work force in Africa we can conclude that migrancy and recency of industrialisation in South Africa may affect the form which proletarianisation takes, but they do are not likely to prevent proletarianisation occurring. Similarly, tribal affiliations may be manipulated as a weapon to be used in conflict within worker organisations, but they are not likely to form the basis for alternative types of organisation. There may be stratification and differentiation of perceived interests within the colonisd working class, based on skill differences, and with schoooling and victorian christianity playing a role in hardening such a differentiation. An awareness of the relation between conquest and exploitation could be a significant factor. These are the main historical and structural parameters within which the process of proletarianisation may be expected to occur.

There is one recent available study of working class consciousness among african workers in Durban, undertaken by Schlemmer in 1971 - 72. A random sample of 350 african men living in married quarters in Durban were inter-

viewed, 85%of whom were blue-collar or other semi-skilled or unskilled workers. Schlemmer's findings were that about 65% of the sample saw themselves as being poor as a result of economic or political discrimination, rather than because of personal failings. While 65% saw the problem in structural terms, 27% showed an awareness of the necessity of dealing with the problem through the setting of group goals and the fostering of unity and solidarity. Another 44% spoke of the desirability of mutual help, but in sentimental and religious terms, rather than with any strategic collective-action orientation. The other 28% saw salvation in egoistic and competitive terms. When the question of action was posed specifically in relation to labour power, 48% revealed some awareness of the potential strenght of black workers, but only 10% formulated this awareness in action-oriented terms. About 40% gave answers which suggested a sense of impotence.

If we assume that these answers are typical of the attitudes of Durban workers before the strikes, then they are very interesting indeed. On the one hand they indicate roughly what one would expect: a high sense of deprivation, interpreted in structural terms, coupled with a much smaller nucleus of at least potential activists able to concieve of a collective response to the situation. On the other hand the very success of the strikes indicates how rapidly a sense of power can be acquired when some event reveals the possibility of effective action.

According to official figures, 61 410 african workers employed by 146 establishments were involved in 160 strikes between 1st January and 31st March 1973. This is probably an underestimate both of the number of strikes and of the number of strikers. It also leaves out of the count themany indian workers who struck together with african workers. Briefly, the strike wave began on the 9th January with a strike of about 2000 workers at Coronation Brick, in the northern suburbs of Durban. These workers were earning a minimum of R8,97 per week, and demanded R20. They are compound workers, but their strike was ;ublicised because workers from outlying compounds marched through the streets to a central meeting place. The strike was given good press coverage. It lasted for a week, and ended when the workers accepted a R2,07 rise. This was followed by a number of minor strikes at small firms in various parts of Durban. On Thursday 25th one of the Frame group textile plants in New Germany, a western suburb, came out on strike. The strike spread rapidly to neighbouring Frame factories, and also to other firms. On the following Monday a Frame factory in Durban itself struck, and on Wednesday the 31st a large Frame factory in the main industrial area of Jacobs-Mobeni struck, precipitating a rash of strikes in other factories in the area.

At this point the spread of the strike movement was encouraged by official reaction to a series of rumours that there would be a rail boycott on the 1st of February. Many firms made arrangements for the workers to stay at work overnight. The police patrolled the townships in great strength to "protect law-abiding commuters against agitators and intimidation". In the even there was very little sign of any boycott, and my impression is that there was probably neverany coherent movement in favour of a boycott. But the effect of official reaction, with its slightly hysterical air, was to inform everybody that there was a crisis situation, and to popularise the idea of striking. By the end of the week about 30 firms had been affected, although some workers were beginning to return, generally with wage increases of the order of R2. The following week the high point was reached when 16 000 african and indian municipal workers

joined in, as well as many factory workers all over Durban. There were numerous groups of strikers marching through the streets. Riot police were flown in from Pretoria, and helicopters patrolled overhead, but there was finally almost no violence. Very sensibly, the police hardly ever interfered. On the Thursday the municipal workers accepted a R2 across the board increase, and most of the textile workers returned at about this time. It became apparent that most workers were unable to sustain a strike lasting for more than a few days. Strikes continued to occur for several weeks, and in fact are still continuing, but the mass movement was over. (For a more detailed account, see IIE, The Durban Strikes).

Although each of the 160 or more strikes which occured in this period undoubtedly had its own peculiarities, I think it is possible to give a rough description of a common pattern. There was no formal beginning. Sometimes the decision to strike was taken in informal meeting outside the gates. In other instances, workers simply stopped work in one part of the factory, and others joined in. The workers then congregated outside the factory, and waited for the employers to react. They rarely elected a negotiating committee and often did not even make any formal demands. When addressed by management they would take up en masse a particular demand. The mood at these meetings with management seems often to have been euphoric, with much good-humoured insult being flung at managers. Similarly, many of the groups of workers moving through the streets were dancing and singing. Management usually refused to negotiate with a "mob", and either told them to return, or else asked them to elect a negotiating committee. Some factories did this, but most refused.

There were two reasons for this. Workers were aware that this could be a ploy to discover the leader, who would then risk dismissal. They were also apparently aware that a work stoppage only becomes a strike when it is associated with formal demands. So workers who simply stop work and wait for employers to do something about it are not technically striking. After the initial meeting workers seem to have remained in the vicinity of the factory. This was a very important element in causing the strikes to spread from factory to factory. In some factories similar meetings were repeated on each day of the strikes, with successively modified proposals from management. Many employers signalled their final offer by formally discharging their entire work force, and offering to reemploy all those who returned at the new wage.

Hyman has distinguished between confrontation strikes and demonstration strikes. The latter usually arise relatively spontaneously, and are designed to draw attention to a grievance, rather than to impose a particular non-negotiable demand. Most of these strikes were demonstration strikes. They expressed pent-up frustration. Demands were formulated after the strike had begun, and were usually large. The most frequent demand was for about R30 per week, or more than double most current wages. It seems unlikely that the workers thought that they would be able to get such wages, since they quickly settled for much more modest increases, of the order of R2 per week.

I shall now analyse these and later strikes from the point of view of some of the questions raised earlier in the general discussion.

1)Organisation and Solidarity

There is no evidence whatever that these strikes were organised by any group from outside the working class, or that the strikes at the various factories were coordinated in any way. Various groups in South Africa, such as Nusas, have been "blamed". Outside South Africa there seem to have been suggestions that Saso may have been responsible, and a representative of an underground organisation claimed the credit at a conference in Sweden last year. In analysing a situation such as this it seems useful to distinguish between "agitators" (using the term non-pejoratively) who act from outside the factory work-force, "activists" among the workers, and "influences" active in the public arena whose works or actions may have had some effect on the behaviour of the workers. Nusas, or, more accurately, the Natal University Wages Commission, may have been such an influence, since it had publicised the concept of the Poverty Datum Line, and had helped groups of workers prepare for Wage Board meetings. Saso is much less likely to have been an influence, since it showed no awareness of specifically worker issues, and had no influence among workers. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and the KwaZulu government were the most important of the influences. Although Buthelezi has been received with a certain amount of suspicion among the black intelligentsia he has enjoyed large, but perhaps varying popularity among the mass of Zulu workers. The fact that he had been attacking government policy was widely known, and probably improved the morale of workers. Nevertheless, these influences only affected the general context in which the strikes occurred, they cannot explain the actual occurrence. There is also no evidence whatsoever that the strikes were caused by outside agitators, of whatever political persuasion. The strikes have to be understood in terms of the internal dynamics of each factory situation.

Sartre's analysis of the process of formation of a "fused group" out of a series would seem to offer the best theoretical explanation of what happened. As we have seen, what characterises a series is the sense of impotence which each member has as a result of the fact that his or her acts are dependent for their meaning on the way in which they are coordinated with the acts of every other individual in the series. Because they remain separate, they cannot consciously coordinate their acts, and so each remains passive for fear of lack of support from the other. In a series a very high level of relative deprivation is compatibleewith inaction. But ifsome external event "fuses" the members of the series their sense of deprivation manifests itself suddenly and clearly. Sartre has analysed this process at work in the storming of the Bastille (Sartre (1) 396). He has also commented on the May revolt in France from this perspective: "In May the detonator was not so much that the workers became conscious of exploitation, but that they became conscious of their own strength and of their own possibilities". (Sartre (2) p 240). In Durban it was not so much thatthe workers in each factory were completely serialised. Rather, the factories themselves were related serially. Workers in each factory may well have been sufficiently well-organised to have their own strike, but in a situation in which that strike would have been isolated, and hence and easy target for repression, they did not dare to do so. But once one or two major strikes had occurred, and workers were meeting in the streets, this factory serialisation was quickly broken down.

It is difficult to document my impression that the workers within each factory probably already had some degree of informal but effective organisation. Partly it is just that it seems intuitively probable that this would be the case. But I rely also on the observation of two graduates who have recently worked on construction sights in Natal, who both independently report that there is a relatively tight organisation which controls work pace, informal "disciplining" of unpleasant supervisors, and also the recruitment process, largely by leaning heavily on unwanted fellow workers. Similarly the experience of union organisers is that it is often a question of convincing key individuals in the factory of the importance of the union. These informal leaders are not necessarily the same people as the more strategically minded individuals discovered by Schlemmer, but the two categories probably largely overlap. When the possibility of striking became visible, the combination of a very high level of deprivation and the existence of such an informal organisational network was sufficient to produce well organised total strikes. To put it the other way round, when seen from this theoretical perspective, the fact of the strikes tell us that what was present beforehand was a high level of relative deprivation combined with a sense of serial impotence. The fact that strikes have continued throughout South Africa since then would seem to indicate that the most important result was to at least blunt that sense of impotence. The formation of formal trade union links between the workers in different factories is probably only a secondary factor here. Although many of the recent strikes in Durban have been at factories where there is some trade union or Benefit Society representation, this does not seem to be universally true. East London had just had a wave of strikes similar in many ways to the Durban strikes, yet there are no open or african trade unions in East London. (Marè).

The fact that the strikes were not organised by some central body also accounts for the relative measure of success which they achieved. It was quite impossible for the state to take action against more than 160 acephalous groups of strikers. Shore of putting nearly 100 000 workers in jail, there was nothing that they could do. Negotiations could occur in each case without state intervention. In earlier attempts at mass action the issues at stake were such as to make compromise solutions difficult, and, in any case, what was usually being demanded, even if it were only £1 a day minimum wage, usually required face-losing government action. In Durban, just because the threat to the powerholders was more diffuse, it was easier to gain concessions from them. Although it is difficult to assess the significance of the rumoured train boycott, it would seem that one reason for its failure was, paradoxically, that many workers wanted to go to work so that they could strike. They decided that the plant-based strike was tactically superior to the mass-strike involved in such a boycott.

2) Aims

The formulated aim of the workers was a large wage increase. The very size of the wage increase demanded may be taken to indicate more than the nature of their realistic expectations. At the mass meetings of textile workers which I attended during the strikes there was a sober

and rational discussion of what, given the existing balance of power, could realistically be hoped for, and this probably characterised all the other workers.

In his discussion of class consciousness Mann distinguished between "economic" and "control" issues, and comments that "economistic activities reduce the CLASS nature of the conflict. This is worth stressing, for their is a tendency to view class conflict in industry as grounded in economic disputes..... To the extent that trade unions pursue economic and job control issues separately, and the latter defensively, and to the extent that they do not pursue wider issues of work control, they operate to WEAKEN workers' class consciousness." (Mann 22-23). From this perspective it woud seem that the Durban workers have a relatively low level of class consciousness. Certainly they do not think in terms of workers' control. But their grievances are not purely economic. In those cases during the strike wave where workers drew up more detailed lists of demands, these referred to donditions of work and also to the question of dismissal procedure. Since then a number of strikes have concerned dismissals. These have been partly solidarity strikes to secure the reinstatement of victimised leaders, (see Ensor), but the issue of arbitrary dismissal per se is also a major grievance. It is worth stressing that in South Africa managerial prerogative over african workers has traditionally been virtually absolute Under these circumstances, all issues are issues of control, whether they concern the right of workers to negotiate for higher wages, or to have recognised trade unions, or to take away the managerial right to hire and fire at will. Because they are perceived by management as issues of control, they may at least come to be perceived in the same way by workers The issue of trade union recognition is very important here. There has already been at least one strike in this connection (see Copelyn), and strikes against liaison committees which have occurred (see Ensor) are also related to worker demand for their own form of organisation. To the extent that employers refuse recognition of strongly organised trade unions, they may encourage the development of more revolutionary class consciousness, rather than permit it to be turned in the more economistic direction which Mann describes as characteristic of trade unions. I would suggest that the large wage demands are one indicator of the instability of the legitimacy accorded by workers to the present wage system. Unless employers can provide a better form of integration, a changing political climate, particularely influenced by the development of an alternative model in Mocambique (if such a development occurs) could lead to a quite rapid development of class consciousness beyond economist demands.

3) Relative Deprivation

The indications are that the level of relative deprivation is high and will remain high. Lacking adequate wage figures, it is impossible to say whether there was a correlation in the January-February strikes between low wage levels and strikes. Certainly some of the most important strikes, at Coronation and in the Frame group, were associated with very low wages. But firms with much higher minimum wage levels were also affected. After the strikes we interviewed 87 workers from different firms and industries.

Among these the 20% earning above the PDL level of R18 per week showed just as high a level of dissatisfaction as did the rest. The recent strikes in East London are a better illustration. The strikes were triggered off by a car plant with an effective minimum take-home wage over R18, which is more than twice the statutory minimum in the area. An analysis of the minimum wages in the 22 affected firms shows a very wide range. A study carried out in East London on January 1974 confirms the impression that relative deprivation is high. Workers interviewed were asked what wage they thought that they should be getting. Most workers named a figure approximately double their current wages. Those on R10 suggested R20; those on R20 suggested R40. The evidence suggests, therefore, that there is no wage level within the range which is "possible" given the present dispensation, which is likely to satisfy the aspirations of workers. (Maré). Schlemmer has also discovered similar demands in several separate studies in Natal (verbal communication).

4) Ethnic and Tribal Factors

The Durban strikes were sometimes described as Zulu strikes. Certainly the majority of the workers were Zulu. But many workers in the Frame factories in New Germany and Pinetown are Xhosa contract workers, who joined in just as enthusiastically as anyone else. This applies also to later strikes in those factories. Acccrding to Textile Union organisers the Xhosa workers are just as interested in the union as are Zulu workers. Neither their contract migrant status nor their "minority" status seems to be relevant. Once more, lacking adequate comparative statistics, it is impossible to say wether firms with a higher or lower proportion of migrants were more or less likely to have strikes. Coronation workers are mainly housed in compounds, so they are probably migrants. As mentioned, many of the Frame workers are migrants. Also it is worth noting that most of the workers in the stevedoring industry, which had a strike and a threatened strike in 1972, are migrants housed in compounds. Thus there is no reason to believe that migrants are less likely to strike. The one factor which does affect migrants, though, is their relatively greater insecurity. If theu are dismissed they have to return to the "homelands" before getting another contract, and this can be expensive. Also, because it is necessary for them to renew their contracts annually, it is easier for an employer to quietly get rid of an activist migrant.

The other main group of workers who took part in the Durban strikes were the Indians. It is not possible to give accurate figures as to how many were involved, but it was certainly a very large number. Some employers suggested that indian workers had been intimidated. However, in our enquiries after the strikes we were unable to find any examples of this, either from employers, indian trade unionists, or the indian workers we interviewed. We were told of incidents in which indian workers asked african workers to "threaten" them so that they could justify their strike to the employers. This may have occurred widely. Only one case of "intimidation" involving an indian worker came to court, and the intimidator was another indian worker.

Shortly after the strikes we interviewed a random sample of 120 indian workers in a subeconomic housing estate near an industrial area. Just under a half of the sample were earning less than R18 per week, and 80% had standard 6 or less education. Many were therefore doing the same kind of jobs as Africans, and earning similar wages. We asked "Everybody was worried about something during the strikes. What were you worried about?" 41% mentioned fear of trouble or violence of some kind, and just over half of these mentioned fear of this trouble coming from Africans. So there was at least an undercurrent of fear on the part of some indian workers. But it seems to me to be more significant that most of our sample were not significantly concerned about this issue. About half of our sample had been involved in a strike, and in about 75% of these cases all or some indian workers are reported to have joined with african workers in striking, although some said that it was because they were afraid of the african workers, none reported actual cases of intimidation. The impression that there was a degree of solidarity is reinforced by the fact that 74% of our sample felt that african workers should be entitled to join the same union, and 76% thought that Indians should join african strikers. Over half those in favour of one union motivated it by reference to the idea that both groups are workers earning the same wages and facing the same problems. Others spoke of the increased strength that would result from solidarity.

From this it would seem that there is a fair degree of solidarity on the shop floor between indian and african workers (although this is likely to depend on the structure of the industry and the history of ethnic employment patterns in the industry). The fear of violence expressed was probably a result of memories of the 1949 riots. The fact that no such violence was repeated, and that many indian workers gained wage increases from the strikes, is likely to have allayed some of the fear and encouraged further solidarity. It is for this reason that I suggested earlier that the relative hostility of some indian trade union officials to african unions may not necessarily reflect the feelings of their members. Security branch pressure and a fear that the comfortable boat will be rocked are perhaps more important. (It is worth mentioning also that the first strike in the East London strikes involved both african and coloured workers).

Of course, none of the above evidence is conclusive. It may be that in an area such as the Witwatersrand, where there is much greater "tribal" diversity, tribal divisions could become much more significant than they are in Durban. Also, it would be silly to deny that there is much anti-african prejudice on the part of both indians and coloureds, and vice-versa. Again, however, it is important to assess the importance of these factors in a dynamic situation. The evidence from the strikes is that they tend to lose whatever salience they may have in such a situation.

5) Stratification

From the strikes and from conversations with workers it is possible to say that the workers are usually fairly hostile to any Africans, such as indunas or personnel managers, who work for management. They see them in class terms, as part of management, rather than in race terms

as fellow members of a group which is discriminated against. A number of employers have had "works committees" of indunas, and these have been condemned by most workers. They are not willing to accept management appointed indunas as their spokesmen. It is more difficult to tell what the attitude towards black clerical workers is. African municipal workers are reported to have forcibly ejected black clerks from their municipal offices during the strikes. What little evidence of this sort that there is suggests that the position would be similar to that described on the copperbelt by Epstein. Among the blue-collar workers there are relatively few skilled workers, but there are many coloured and indian artisans who have their "boys" to carry their tools. Here the difference of interest between skilled and unskilled may be reinforced by ethnic stereotypes. However, during the strikes the artisans in the furniture industry did help the labourers, who are mainly african, by insisting on an improvement in their wages as part of an agreement.

Two strikes throw conflicting light on the question of stratification in relation to wage differentials. The bloodiest clash on the mines last year (1973) resulted when skilled african miners protested the fact that a recent wage increase for less skilled miners had lead to a decline in the wage differential. On the other hand, a very interesting strike in Durban resulted from an attempt by an employer to introduce a system of individual "merit" increases. About a dozen workers received no increase on this system, and the entire work force went on strike in protest, forcing the employer to grant increases to all but two of them. (Ensor 2) Here victorian christianity evidently gave way to genuine worker solidarity, and an awareness that such a system is designed to divide the workers, and to exact increased productivity at minimum cost. If we combine the implications of these two strikes we might hazard a guess that workers feel that their should be a differential between types of job requiring different amounts of skill and training, but that all workers doing the same job should get the same income, rather than be competitively divided.

6) Power and the Development of Trade Unions

So far we have been attempting to analyse the type of consciousness manifested in the strikes. It is of course important to stress that the present situation of worker militancy is rooted also in a changed objective situation. As the economy develops, black workers become more preponderant in the industrial work-force in numerical terms, and also move into more skilled and especially semi-skilled operative jobs. Elkan has made the point that both skilled artisans and unskilled labourers are not in any way limited to one particular industry, but semi-skilled operatives, trained to work one particular type of machine, can only move out of the industry at the price of losing their skill and beginning again as labourers. (Elkan 2 p 139). This means that semi-skilled workers are more dependent on the industry, while at the same time the industry is more dependent on them. The operative's job may require only a few days formal training before he or she can operate the machine, but it requires several months experience before full production is reached. The employer cannot afford to throw away this experience by dismissing strikers. The worker, on the other hand, is closely concerned

with the wage structure in the industry. This offers a relatively favourable ground both for strike action and for trade unionism.

Since the 1973 strikes the growth of african trade unions has been rapid, although by no means problem free. Before,the strikes the only african workers organisation in Natal was the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund, which at the time had around 2 000 members. At present the book membership of the Benefit Fund and the five industrial unions associated with it is in the region of 30 000. The Benefit Fund offers funeral benefits and a workers complaint service, but it is evident that many members join it also because they see it as a workers' organisation offering worker solidarity, and not just individual benefits. For example, when there are strikes at factories with large Benefit Society membership, the workers usually ask for help from the Benefit Society. (see Ensor 1 + 2).

The problems, both internal and external, facing these new unions are discussed more fully in an appendix prepared by Harold Nxasana. The existence and growth of the unions does indicate an increasing sense of class identity and class opposition. Of course, many workers remain ununionised..Partly this is the result of the shortage of trade union organisers with training. But it is also probably the result of resistance from some workers. It is worth pointing out that this resistance could derive from either of two contrary attitudes. On the one hand it could come from the minority uncovered by Schlemmer who tend to see worker problems in terms of personal failings, and/or to conceive of solutions in individualistic terms. But on the other hand it may come from those who have seen many forms of trade union and political organisation be effectively repressed. These workers may feel that the unions are not viable. They may feel that given present balance of forces it is easier for workers to make gains by using methods of informal control in the factories, and through leaderless wildcat strikes. They may also be right here. The unions could not call strikes even if they wanted to (other than by using the complicated procedure defined in the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Amendment Act). The most they can do is to intervene when workers do go on strike, and to act as a channel for the workers' demands. Under these circumstances some of the more militant workers may feel that it is better for them to stay outside the public union organisation.

Conclusion: Class Consciousness in Durban

I suggested earlier that there are at least five different dimensions to class consciousness: perceptions of relative deprivation, community of interests, social structure, power, and alternatives. On the basis of the above analysis, I think we can conclude that colonised workers in Durban on the whole have a high level of relative deprivation, and also a high sense of community of interest with fellow workers. This would seem, at least to some extent, to cut across tribal and ethnic cleavages, but

perhaps not across income and status stratification between unskilled and semi-skilled on the one hand and artisans and white collar on the other hand, (although I have no really firm evidence on the question of stratification, at least between artisans and semi-skilled and unskilled). There is also an increased sense of power, of the possibility of escape from serial impotence, although this sense of power probably refers only to power to bring about some change on the level of the factory. There is no indication that there is any consideration of mobilising this power for broader objectives. This is related to the fact that there is no clearly articulated understanding of the precise mechanisms of exploitation or of an alternative form of society. Although there seems to be a recognition of the necessity of worker solidarity both within the factory and outside it, this may in fact be still much closer to Beynon's "factory consciousness". That is, it could be argued that there is no clear articulation between the feeling of being oppressed as a colonised nation in the wider society, and being exploited as colonised workers in the factory. However, this seems to be unlikely. Schlemmer's evidence for african workers was that most african workers were aware ofbeing unfavourably placed through discrimination. Of course, this is not the same as a recognition that the wage system itself was imposed by the colonists' monopolising of the means of production. It is quite compatible with the confused beliefs that the wage system would be fine as long as everybody had an equal chance within it, and might be associated more with hostility towards colonist workers than towards employers. It is probably accurate to say that there is no detailed understanding of the structural relations between the socio-political system and economic exploitation. But, a) there clearly is, through the perception of discrimination, at least some awareness of a relationship; and b) the analysis of "uprootedness" should lead us to suspect a fairly high degree of awareness. Many african workers, in particular, have either themselves experienced the necessity of becoming wage-workers through lack of land, or know of it directly through their fathers' experience. The relation between deprivation of direct access to the means of production and wage-exploitation is thus likely to be relatively transparent, although not necessarily articulated in formal structural terms. However, the question of the vision of an alternative form of society remains. There is no evidence to suggest that colonised workers do in fact have such a vision in "class" rather than "nation" terms. That is, they may envisage a society without colonist oppressors, but they do not necessarily have any idea of a society without a wage-system. This raises the interesting question of the relative salience of class solidarity and colonised-solidarity outside the work situation. I have suggested that at work the workers think clearly in class terms, and seecolonised supervisors and personnel officers as part of "them", rather than""us". But it may be that in other situations, particularly in the political arena, this would no longer apply. Kuper suggested that there was some ambivalence in the attitude of working class africans towards members of the middle class, whom they saw both as potential traitors and as potential leaders (Kuper p 145 - 6), (and Schlemmer reports discovering similar attitudes in his current research). However, at present the fastest growing

group amongst the middle class are the executives and personnel managers, who, unlike the old professional middle class, enter into clear relations of class exploitation with the workers. This may well have the effect of alienating workers further from the colonised middle class as a whole. This may be further encouraged to the extent that the policy of separate development provides protection for the growth of a class of colonised entrepreneurs. What evidence there is indicates that such entrepreneurs will behave towards workers in class terms, rather than as fellow-colonised (see Hart, Brandel-Syrier p 43 - 4).

Turok suggests that, even for those workers who may develop a socialist consciousness, "the structure around them confirms that they are first black and second proletarians. Whereas in a mature capitalist country uncomplicated by race divisions, economic or trade union consciousness is generated spontaneously, in South Africa a sense of black deprivation is uppermost". (Turok p 343). He therefore goes on to argue that, in the struggle, the role of the black proletariat "will be played out in national (race) rather than in class terms since this is how the contradictions manifest themselves". (345). However, I do not believe that this can be so easily taken for granted. The argument has to some extent been refused by the rapid growth of african trade unions. Also, it is important to note that "black consciousness" has made very little impact on the working class. Up till now it has remained a phenomenon of the black middle classes. Its stress on "national" rather than "class" issues may well derive precisely from the fact that the black middle classes want access to "equal pay for equal work" within the present wage system. Of course, the theory is not enunciated in such "reformist" terms, but it may draw its sustenance from the sentiment of rejection on the part of the "évolué", rather than from the worker's sense of exploitation. The failure of black consciousness within the working class is to some extent also a result of leadership failures. But this also indicates that there is a gap between colonised middle and working classes. The black consciousness theorists have so far failed to articulate the problems and grievances of the colonised workers; because they themselves have different problems. It is interesting that they have drawn almost entirely on the writings of afro-american theorists, who write from the position of an oppressed minority, rather than of a majority. In South Africa black consciousness theorists almost seem to see themselves as an oppressed minority, which they are, within the middle class as a whole. (They have yet to develop a theory and a political strategy which recognises their position in relation to a majority colonised proletariat).

This does not mean, of course, that the colonised condition will not be of significance within the consciousness of members of the working class, and this colonised position may well be articulated in racial terms. But this is not really the same as calling it a "national struggle". Or, to put it another way, a movement by an exploited proletariat which defines itself in racial terms will be a very different kind of movement from an ordinary nationalist movement. Members of the colonised middle class might,

because of those aspects of oppression which they share with the workers, be willing to support such a movement. But this would then be on working class terms and for working class objectives, rather than for traditional nationalistic objectives.

The difficulty with analysing this problem is that there are three different relationships involved: the relation of colonist to colonised, expressed initially in conquest; the relation of capitalist to worker mediated by the market; and the relation of white to black as it manifests itself in discrimination. It is evident simply from enumerating them that, in structural terms, the white-black relationship is the least important. The trouble is that it often gets confused with the far more important colonist-colonised relationship, both by actors and observers. It is the colonist-colonised relationship which established the patterns of relations to the means of production which manifests itself in the capitalist-worker relationship. The question which therefore arises for the analysis of class consciousness is this: do workers a) see themselves as members of an exploited class, and b) recognise the structural origins of proletarianisation in colonisation.

In terms of the six levels of class consciousness suggested, we may conclude that:

1) there is a set of beliefs shared in common with other members of the class
2) there is an awareness of a common class interest
3) of class identity
4) of class opposition
5) it is not possible to say that there is a clear awareness of class totality, although there may well be some elements of this present
6) there would also not appear to be any clear concept of an alternative society to be reached through struggle with one's opponent.

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