THE DURBAN STRIKES 1973

By Richard Turner

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The first edition of this book did not name Rick Turner as the principle author of this book because he along with other academics and his students who helped him in compiling this book were also banned

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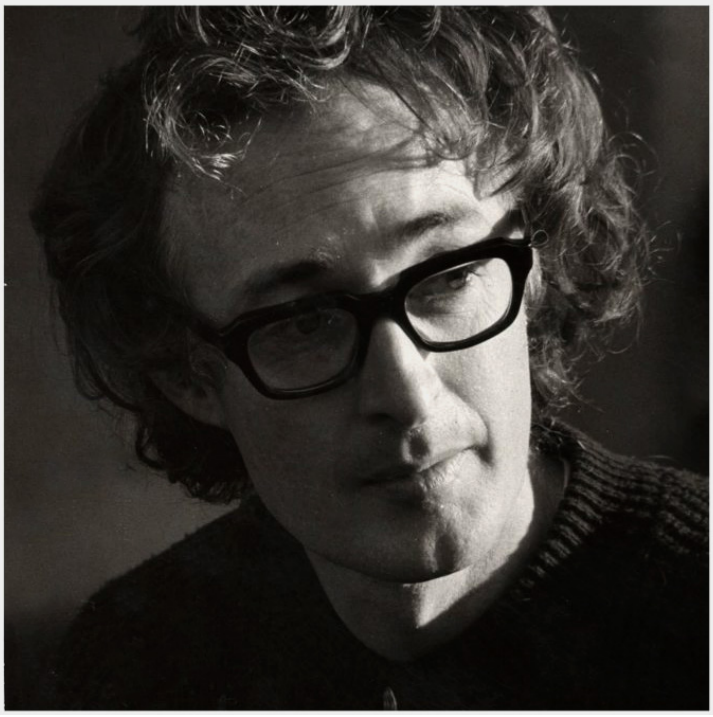
Richard Turner



25 September 1941 - 08 January 1978

"Employers, whoever they may be,
should not only see in their
workers a unit prodyction for
them so many hours of service
a day. They should also see
them as human beings with souls."

B. J Vorster
The prime Minister of South Africa

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This study of the Durban strikes is a collective work. I was assisted throughout by Foszia Fisher and Karel Tip and other members of the Staff, and the Academic Advisory Panel of the Institute for Industrial Education. The South African Institute of Race Relations, of which I was a member of staff when I undertook this research, provided a grant of R 500 to cover the cost of the research on which the first three chapters are based. We received cooperation, assistance, and advice from more people than we can mention here. We would particularly like to thank Irene Dlamini and Alpheus Mthethwa, who managed to find time in their very busy schedules to interview African workers for us; Raphael De Kadt, of the Department of History and Political Science at the University of Natal, who organised the opinion polls of members of the White public; and Omar Badsha, Shamiem and Shenaz Meer, and Shereen Timol who helped in organising and carrying out the interviews with Indian workers.

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We would like to thank the many workers, Trade Unionists and businessmen who answered our questions, and the students who carried out the interviews.

This study was originally designed and initiated by Richard Turner, of the Department of History and Political Science at the University of Natal, but restrictions placed upon him by the government at the end of February 1973 made it illegal for him to take any further part in the study. We regret that we are not permitted to associate his name with

this publication. Two other participants, Halton Cheadle and David Hemson, have also since been banned and, can, likewise, no longer be associated with this publication.

Gerhard P. Mare

INTRODUCTION

African workers in South Africa have a long history of industrial experience. Africans first began to work in non-agricultural activities in the 1870s, with the development of diamond mining, and then later gold mining. With the growth of secondary industry, especially from the 1920's onwards, the range of African worker activity broadened. The 1950 figure of approximately 1 000 000 African workers engaged in the non-agricultural sectors of mining, manufacturing, electricity, construction, commerce and finance, and transport had almost doubled by 1970 and in 1973 certainly exceeded 2 000 000 (Hobart Houghton p. 242RR. 78/73). About 40% of the total economically active African population are now employed in these sectors.

During this time Africans began to organise themselves to protect their own interests using the methods of industrial workers in other countries: the trade union and the strike. African trade unions have existed since the First World War, although their membership has fluctuated. In the 1920's membership of the giant Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU), African-led with a predominantly African membership, _ reached over 2 000 000 at one stage. In 1927 its strongest and best-organised branch in Durban claimed a membership of 26 000. The ICU expanded too fast, and finally collapsed, partly under its own weight. Its career, policies, problems and final fate were very similar to those of the "Grand National Consolidated Trade Union", (Pelling pp. 38-42), the first mass union in Britain. During and after the Second World War there was a resurgence of African trade unionism, and by 1945 African union membership again reached 150 000, (Horrell p. 8), but in better organised industrial unions. Continued Government harassment and repressive legislation made it difficult for these unions to operate

successfully, but in 1961 they still had over 60 000 members (Horrell p. 61). In the following decade, nearly all the African unions disappeared and by 1969 only 13 unions with a combined membership of 16 040 remained (Horrell p. 145).

Successive Governments have taken action against African workers and African strikers and African unionists under a variety of different acts, of which the most important are: the Masters and Servants Acts, dating from the 1850's and still in force; the Riotous Assemblies Act, first passed in 1913; the so-called "Hostility Clause" of the Native Administration Act of 1927, which was used against trade union organisers on the grounds that they were "provoking hostility between Black and White"; War Measure 145 of 1942, which introduced harsh penalties against african strikers and remained in force until 1953; the Suppression of Communism Act, which was used to restrict many trade union officials; and the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act; which laid down heavy penalties for striking.

In spite of the fact that until mid-1973 strikes by African workers were illegal, they occurred regularly. The first small African strikes on the mines occurred before the First World War, and after the War in 1919 -1920, there was a spate of strikes, one a well-organised stoppage by over 40 000 miners. The first of these post-first World War strikes involved 152 night-soil bucket removers in Johannesburg, who wanted an extra 6d a day in wages. They were all arrested and sentenced to two months imprisonment. The magistrate, in sentencing them, said "While in gaol they would have to do the same work as they had been doing and would carry out the employment with an armed escort, including a guard of Zulus armed with assegais, and White men with guns. If they attempted to escape, and if it were necessary, they would be shot down. If they refused to obey orders, they would receive lashes as often as might be necessary to make them understand that they had to do what they were told" (Walker and Weinbren p.277). This attitude is not atypical of what has been the normal reaction of those in authority to strikes by African workers. However, such strikes continued, with another surge after the Second World War. In 1946, 74

000 african mine workers, earning a basic rate of 2s 3d. per shift, wages which were, in real terms, lower than they had been in 1911 (Wilson (1) p.65), went on strike for higher wages. The State intervened decisively: "Strike leaders on all the mines involved were arrested, police surrounded the compounds and, when stoned at one mine, fired on the miners. In another mine, a baton charge was made and in another, the men were driven underground from their compounds at bayonet point. Seventy men were dismissed, nine were killed, and more than twelve hundred injured", (Ibid, p.79). The strike was broken within four days. The then United Party Prime Minister, General Smuts, said that the strike "was not caused by legitimate grievances but by agitators", who were "trying to lead the Natives and the country to destruction". During the 1950's strikes continued, although by the end of the decade the State was beginning to take effective control. The following table gives the number of strikes and subsequent legal actions (Horrell, p.73)

Year	Number of Strikes	Number of African Workers Involved	Prosecutions and Convictions of Workers
1955	82	9479	340 prosecuted 314 convicted
1956	92	6428	524 convicted
1957	113	6158	539 prosecuted
1958	64 & 1 lock out	7128	274 convicted
1959	36	3462	453 convicted
1960	33	2199	822 prosecuted
			211 convicted
			1 case pending
			364 prosecuted
			1 case pending

Between 1962 and 1968 the number of Africans involved in officially reported strikes does not seem to have risen above 2 000 per year but since 1969 there has been a slight increase. At the end of 1971 about 13 000 Ovambo workers in South West Africa went out on a long and partly successful strike against low wages and conditions of service. In 1972 there was an increase in strikes in South Africa itself. One of the most important of these strikes was that by over 2 000 stevedores in Durban's docks in October 1972.

It is against this background that we have to assess the significance of the Durban strikes of January-March, 1973. African workers had previously struggled to use the trade union and strike weapons of the industrial proletariat but had failed, both because of repressive State action and because of certain crucial social factors, in particular, the fact that many of the workers were unskilled labourers and easily replaceable by the large numbers of unemployed. The Durban strikes are different in two important ways. Firstly, the State did not intervene in strength. No force was used against strikers. The arrests that were made were of groups of workers marching through the streets who were fined minimal sums, and no violence was used to force workers back to work. Secondly, the strikes were largely successful. The workers did not have their initial demands satisfied, but nearly all of them did gain appreciable wage increases.

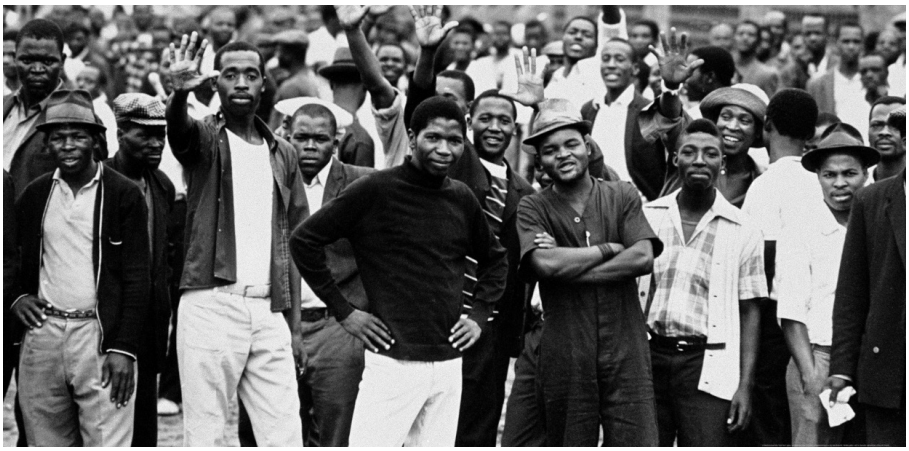
The strikes have been widely recognised as a major event in South African social history. But precisely what was their significance? Does the fact that the strikes could occur at all indicate that the role of African workers in the economy has changed qualitatively? Does the mild Government reaction, and the widespread sympathy shown by the Whites in Durban, indicate a fundamental change in the attitudes of Whites towards Blacks in South Africa? From the point of view of the social scientist investigating the strikes from this perspective, there are many problems. Firstly, the ramifications and implications of the strikes are extraordinarily complex. It is necessary to attempt to assess their impact on a wide range of different publics, and, therefore, also to attempt to understand the overall social and political relations between

those publics. Secondly, it must be assumed that in order to break the law in large numbers, people must be unusually strongly motivated, and one cannot understand the reasons for this without reference to the whole politico-legal framework in which they operate. Finally, in the absence of any workers' organisations which might have called the strikes, organised them, and managed the negotiations, it is very difficult to find out what actually happened. The strikes either came about through some quite complicated underground organisation (of which there is no evidence), or else they came about as a result of a large number of independent decisions by unofficial leaders and influential workers in different factories. Similarly, the decision to return to work must in each case have been the function of different decision-making procedures dealing with different "sets of immediate problems. The total number of firms affected by strikes in the Natal region probably exceeded 150. Thus an adequate account of the strikes would have required us to interview hundreds of participants, and the whole process would have been complicated by the illegality of the strikes. The people whom it would have been most interesting and useful to interview, those who took the initiative in each enterprise, are precisely those people who would have the most to fear from police or employer action.

Faced with these problems, and with our own limitations of money and personnel, we had, therefore, to concentrate on certain specific aspects of the whole situation, and it is important that the readers should be aware of our choices. In our interviews with workers, trade unionists, employers and others we did not attempt to uncover new facts about what actually happened. We were more interested in the way the various groups perceived what had happened, and in the ways in which this might have affected their thinking. For our actual description of the strikes, we have relied mainly on press reports, fleshed out here and there by our own observations or by information obtained in the course of our interviews. The result of this method is that we have to remain to a certain extent at the level of generalisations. It is, for example, possible to isolate the major general causes of the strikes, but it would also be important to know what it was that led a

particular group of workers in a particular factory on a particular day to react to these general causes by stopping work. But this we were unable to investigate.

A second problem, and one which is always involved in a work of this nature, is that one is writing for several different audiences at the same time; for “posterity”, for other social scientists, and for the interested public. For posterity, one wishes to produce a record which can be used without having to refer to memory or to old newspaper clippings. Other social scientists are interested in methodological problems, and, often, in the careful verification of what most other people take for granted. The interested general public wants a footnote-free account which neither assumes too much, nor assumes too little a very difficult balance to keep. We have, doubtless, successfully fallen between the three stools.



Half a century later: Durban Strikes – 1973

Gerhard Maré

Synopsis of the strikes

In early 1973 more than 60,000 (some reports claim 100,000) workers downed tools in several industries (but especially in textiles) and social services (such as municipal work) in Durban and surrounding industrial areas. What made that a noteworthy disturbance in the oppressive pervasiveness of apartheid rule? Why, along with the 1976 Soweto uprising amongst school children, should the strikes in 1973 regularly be referred to as a turning point in the struggle against apartheid?

In South Africa's racist and class-informed legislation at the time, black African workers were deliberately excluded from the legal definition of employee, and from the right to form unions recognised in the formal labour relations system. Strike actions by black African workers were illegal. But this did not mean that they did not occur. However, the figures reported in the book on the events, Durban Strikes – 1973, indicate the very small numbers of annual participants before the 1973 strike wave (5). Between 1955 and 1968, for example, the numbers of strikers, as reported, did not exceed 2,000 per annum. In October 1972, however, action by 2,000 stevedores brought much of the Durban harbour to a standstill. But the scale of what took place from early January 1973 and over the next few months – largely in industrial and municipal service areas around and in the port city of Durban – effectively illustrated that worker grievances and demands could no longer be seen as localised in individual firms, nor as isolated exceptions to a generally enforced calm. Rather, they represented concerted action against a system of enforced 'cheap labour' and daily-experienced conditions of an extremely unequal and racist society.

Durban Strikes provides a brief history of the strikes in its first chapter. A few aspects are notable, and relevant in considering subsequent developments. It is generally accepted that the first event,

separable in many respects from what followed, was the strike at Coronation Brick and Tile (CB&T) on January 9, 1973, involving some 2,000 workers (9-14). The distinctiveness is that this strike was related, through outsiders entering the labour field, to a specific form of politics. This intervention linked workplace grievances already expressed by workers to non-class and contentious political dynamics. At CB&T Zulu ethnicity, Bantustan politics, and the involvement of contracted migrant labour, housed in hostels, all featured. It introduced several individuals – and their complex contestation for power, then and later – into the events unfolding then and into the future. The first of these was 'paramount chief' (title later changed to 'king') Goodwill Zwelithini, favoured, by the apartheid state to lead the embryonic KwaZulu Bantustan.

This pitted him against Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, seen as untrustworthy when loyal participation in driving the process to 'independence' for the 'Zulu nation' was required. Zwelithini had visited the migrant hostels and factory in late 1972 to address, and make promises of wage improvements to 'his people'. His uncle and chief minister, Buthelezi (who, for the first decade or so of his Bantustan leadership, had African National Congress (ANC) support for his participation in this state structure, but had his own agenda in this role), was thus inevitably brought into the picture. Most directly linked to labour issues was the third outsider, then KwaZulu councillor for community affairs, Barney Dladla. He became prominent in direct support for strikers (118-120) – but was dismissed by Buthelezi in 1974. This ethnic dimension became irrevocably entangled within the developing political field of 'separate development' and resistance to it: internally, with an ethnic union formed later by Buthelezi's Zulu movement, Inkatha; and externally, through vicious conflict – described as a 'civil war' – between Inkatha and the state, and the ANC from 1979 into the 1990s. This initial strike immediately raised the central issue of discriminatory and low wages paid to workers, especially as internal migrants, but also to all unrepresented black workers. Coronation Brick and Tile, in its own way, highlighted the failure of existing, and management-preferred, means of communication and representation

in, and in relation to the work place. Most important, in this regard, was the absence of truly independent organisations, trade unions, that would give power to workers free from the tenuous goodwill of employers. What was also specific about this first strike to make the news was the hostel housing of the workers, increasing their dependence on the firm (much as is the case with farm workers), but also serving, to some extent, to isolate the incident from other workers: hostel accommodation meant no shared transport or neighbours in residential areas as was the case for the majority. Because of the spatial proximity of scattered rural and township parts of KwaZulu to these industrial areas, the majority of workers were commuters. However, the CB&T strike 'was widely reported in the local press. Banner headlines were accompanied by photographs of [brick and tile] workers massed on the football field [provided for workers in the hostels] or marching down the road carrying a red flag – for traffic control, rather than as a sign of political allegiance' (13). The entry into the labour field of 'traditional authority' carried very a different meaning in the late 1960s and early 1970s than is the case with present continuities of ethnic rule.

See Gerhard Maré and Georgina Hamilton (1987). Chapter 6 deals specifically with the implications of KwaZulu and its politicians' involvement in labour matters, in which Dladla featured prominently in 1973.Also Maré 2020.

See, for example, Mxolisi R Mchunu (2020) Violence and Solace: the Natal civil war in late-apartheid South Africa. Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Press.

Do we even need a reminder that, then, all classified as 'non-white' did not have the vote and the majority of those were also in process of being denied citizenship through the 'homeland' policy, hidden behind the euphemism of 'separate development'?

While the strikes were in progress at Coronation several smaller strikes occurred, some traceable to specific issues such as 'derisory pay-offers' made at the start of the new year by the employers. Prominent in newspaper reports generally were the demands for wage increases, with the amounts called for, and comparison with existing wages. The reports featured management and Labour Department responses, as well as the presence or absence of police and the military. Dismissals were mentioned in some cases. Even during the initial small scale of the strikes, the publicity prompted calls for improvement of working conditions, especially in wages. The strikes became a public issue, of shame and of blame. By late January 'the trickle became a wave', now amongst larger firms, and most prominently in textiles, featuring the notorious Frame Group, in the New Germany-Pinetown industrial areas in the greater Durban metropole (22-38). Pickets, street protests, and marches made the strikes visible as mass protests – no longer just from dissatisfied workers in recognisable separate firms. From the first strike, the state, as well as some employers and members of the public, employed the terms 'agitators' and 'instigators' to make common 'sense' of local worker action and local protests. Such blame was a common knee-jerk attempt, not only then, nor only in response to worker action, to deflect attention from systemic exploitation, onto a few devious and revolutionary 'agents' or ideological positions sowing discontent in a situation where all was otherwise well. More specifically, the finger was pointed at 'communists', already a state favourite, decades before 1973. Closer to home, and with at least some evidence, 'university students' and 'the Wages Commission' fitted also within conspiratorial sense-making. The term 'spontaneous' was used in press coverage as if there were no preconditions for each new group of strikers to recognise their own grievances in defiance, and to join the growing solidarity in action.

The purpose and arguments in, and response to, what occurred in 1973, are necessary for an evaluation half a century later. It provides a view of what was seen as important, and feasible, at that time in the country's history. Extending this historically enables evaluation of responses that can be linked to the strikes – why adaptations, successes

and failures occurred over the next 50 years; what happened to class politics after 1973? And, in 2023, to discuss what social goals should be in future goals, and what stands in the way of their realisation.

Biography of a book

When I recently opened my own copy of Durban Strikes – 1973, written 50 years ago, with underlining and marginal notes scribbled over the years, I discovered that it also contained some items folded into it. There were two photocopies, one of a 1975 review of the book by Richard Hyman, and one a 1975 published eye-witness account by anthropologist Brian du Toit. There was a newspaper article, dated 2003, by sociologist Ari Sitas, looking back on the strikes from 30 years on. And most immediate to the moment there were some small stickers printed in isiZulu and English – pre-social media tools for communicating protest -- calling for wage increases of R30 per week, and for the recognition of trade unions for all. The stickers had been affixed all over the city's landscape by members of the student Wages Commission and by Durban workers themselves, in the early 1970s. The call for R30 was radical, compared to actual wages, as revealed in Durban Strikes (85). So, another set of memories, other than the book and photographs, engaging with those times, was brought to mind. Reflections on the events captured through research and text in 1973 itself, and first published in 1974, would be best written, half a century later, through the voices of all those involved in the production of the original text. However, that is unfortunately not feasible. I was employed, at the time, in the regional office of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), did the interviews with managers for the study, and had my name appended to the original 'Acknowledgements' because I had not been 'banned' and could therefore be named. Even if I did not write it. How did Durban Strikes come about, by whom, and why; and how did state action affect its production and circulation? It was especially the scale of the strikes, and their confrontational visibility, that made it largely unforeseen in 1973. Worker actions at factories and facilities in greater Durban were thus a clear and notable instant, an occasion discussed by the public, and by worker organisations, locally and internationally. A response

that could document and analyse, and centrally assist, direct and produce further activism, was understood by those already engaged in a number of ways with workers and members of their families. The need urgently to capture, explain and shape opinion and action around the events and what lay behind them was clear. Durban Strikes was, therefore, a strategic production, defined by the immediate context of this historical moment and the necessity perceived by its producers. Who were they?

No author names appear on the cover but were implied. The cover and spine simply displayed 'Institute for Industrial Education' and 'I.I.E.' respectively. The publisher and printer are both also given as I.I.E. (or the Institute for Industrial Education, an initiative itself still in very early progress at that stage); the address is Durban's Gale Street, a major commuter bus and delivery route, with some businesses lining it. It was certainly not recognisable in the world of publishing. But it was familiar to workers in the city, at the busy harbour close by, and from the surrounding industrial areas, travelling to and from work, and visiting the union office, Bolton Hall. It was a favourite site for activists to distribute pamphlets, and not easy for the police to prevent such dissemination.

https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/institute-industrial-education-iie; also Edward Webster (2021) . Publisher included 'in association with Ravan Press', in Johannesburg (https://mg.co.za/article/1996-11-01-ravan-child-of-a-special-time/). The connection probably brings in Peter Randall, who had been active in Spro-cas who had just published Rick Turner's Eye of the Needle (1972)

The book was largely, the brain-child of Rick Turner, recently arrived but already an influential lecturer in politics at the University of Natal on its Durban campus (UND). Rick operated from his arrival as an intellectual activist. However, the strikes project had, from https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/institute-industrial-education-iie; also Edward Webster (2021) . Publisher included 'in association with Ravan Press', in Johannesburg the start, the active involvement of a number of others; obviously, and most closely, Rick's partner, Foszia Fisher (now known as Foszia Turner-Stylianou).

The writing was done in the main by Rick Turner, David Hemson, Halton Cheadle – all three were banned in February 1973 by the state, under 'security' legislation, which prevented their names from being listed as authors in the book, and placing obstacles in the way of meeting around the production – and Gerhard Maré. Two interviewers, gaining data on African worker attitudes, Irene Dlamini and Alpheus Mthethwa, are acknowledged, as are four (students from the then University of Durban-Westville – now known as University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban – Westville campus) who assisted in interviews of Indian workers. In addition, three lecturers from UND and two SAIRR staff are thanked in the 'Acknowledgements' for advice and comments on sections of the text. In summary, it drew together people with skills – academics, students, researchers – usually in the service of systems of control and exploitation; but here informed by a resurgence of critical thinking around capitalism, racism and domination, towards democracy, non-racialism and socialism.

The first copies showed physical signs of the rush in production – inconsistent layout, type-written text, and poor binding – reflecting the need of the moment, urgently to respond; motivated by the realisation that the events signified important political and economic actors and action. To keep costs down, as well as for reasons of security, the technology was basic: layout was certainly done on a 'light table', by hand.

The first four chapters cover the events, the participants, as well

as contemporary responses from businesses (individuals and organisations), the state, existing unions, and the public. Chapter 1 supplies a chronology with a specific focus on the textile industry, and reactions from the press, police and existing unions – all of direct relevance to pressure for immediate and future actions from businesses and the state. Chapter 2 presents research findings through surveys initiated and coordinated by the participants in the book. Chapter 3 explores and evaluates explanations offered; while chapter 4 covers debates in the white parliament and 'The black response'. The final two chapters – 'Political economy of labour' and 'Trade unions' – make the educational and political argument and purpose of the publication clear. Giving effect to these aims – through making use of the book – continued subsequent to publication through sympathetic journalists, existing trade unions, and other civil society institutions. For example, the present author, then employed at the SAIRR regional office, spoke at a meeting of businessmen in Pietermaritzburg on the findings and proposals of Durban Strikes.

The earliest review of Durban Strikes followed soon after it was published, written by Richard Hyman, the author of Strikes (1972) and outspoken in debates on trade unionism. His contribution appeared in an early issue of the South African Labour Bulletin (SALB) (1975, 2(2)). The Labour Bulletin turned out to be a long-lasting initiative directly linked to the people engaged in Durban Strikes, and part of a multi-pronged strategy around progressive change. Hyman summarises the content of Durban Strikes, notes that it 'compares most favourably with other recent accounts on individual strikes and strike movements'; and adds that '… While the authors admit candidly the limitations of their evidence, their explanation of the … strikes has the ring of plausibility. He draws a comparison with British union history and notes that 'the prediction that the Durban strikes will herald increasing Black self-assertiveness is wholly reasonable'.

Hyman here focuses on the reason why the reference to '1973' remains important to any subsequent serious examination of social change in the country. The first period after 1973 (the rest of the 1970s) did

lead directly to important aspects of the achievement of an inclusive democratic order. But Hyman also, already, correctly writes that 'legal and recognized African trade unionism' is the only way in which the 'militancy unleashed in 1973 [can] conceivably be contained' (emphasis added). I return to this point, of containment through trade unionism, below.

Intention and context: radical reform

The research for and the publication of Durban Strikes were collective efforts with a purpose. First, to offer a counter narrative to state and conservative media interpretations of the strikes. Second, to argue in favour of extending organisational form to worker dissatisfaction within South Africa's racial capitalism. These aims were a part of other initiatives towards the same ends. Initial steps were in progress to assist in organising the majority – black African workers – into worker organisations. Practical assistance for workers engaging state structures, such as Wage Board hearings, that affected working conditions was operational – this also entailed research into poverty, such as PDL (Poverty Datum Line) studies, in which Lawrence Schlemmer, at the UND, played a major role, and Wages Commission members assisted in various ways. The university-based worker education initiative, the IIE was underway.

An academic journal, the South African Labour Bulletin (SALB), serving as a platform for research and analysis related to the world of work, was launched. Workers themselves and a range of supporters – individuals with previous and present engagement with worker organisations, students and academics, especially from the University of Natal campuses

were drawn in. Students were offered the opportunity to engage in practical activities towards social change, in this case in the labour field. Organisational support came from NUSAS (the National Union of South African Students), and especially through the newly formed Wages Commissions at both campuses of the University of Natal. Later the Commissions were expanded to most NUSAS-affiliated campuses and Community Commissions were also created. These are aspects of the context within which the intentions of Durban Strikes have to be understood, as part of wider activities, many of them inter-related, both in personnel and aims. The book starts with a quotation from then prime minister BJ Vorster (iii) – an inclusion meant to be both strategic (in holding the state to its parliamentary words) and to underscore the obvious ironies in the statement:

In this wider perspective and during the same time, within which the strikes had such an impact and why the dissemination of Durban Strikes was undertaken, there were other examples of analysis and engagement with specific readerships, such as the South African Council of Churches and Christian Institute of South Africa, Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society (Spro-cas) publications – which included Turner's Eye of the Needle. Further Spro-cas books, in 1972, included such as Power, Privilege and Poverty, and Francis Wilson's Migrant Labour in South Africa, dealing with issues similar to Durban Strikes (both published in 1972). In 1973 Peter Randall, Spro-cas director before he took charge of Ravan Press (see fn6 above), published the final, summary, report of the series under the title A Taste of Power, in which a case for trade unions for all is made (1973:76-8) – in my copy sections are blacked out – Bennie Khoapa had been banned and blacked out, as well as a quote from 'B.S. Biko (ed) Black Viewpoint', itself a Spro-cas publication from 1972, because Biko had been banned.

For more on students' involvement in labour and general radicalism, see such as Moss (2014

Employers, whoever they may be, should not only see in their workers a unit producing for them so many hours of service a day. They should also see them as human beings with souls.

Vorster may well have intended, through this cynical remark, to take a shot at United Party-supporting businesses in the Natal province. This was the only province where the National Party (NP) had struggled to get majority support from white voters – but where the United Party (UP) was little different from the NP (except in its 'English' prejudices against Afrikaners). Vorster's contribution to the parliamentary debate could also be seen as an attempt to deflect, along with the 'homeland' policy, from the state's legislative dehumanisation of all those South Africans excluded from citizenship in the country. In his account of the strikes, Brian Du Toit found it appropriate to observe, for an international readership, that under NP apartheid policies 'Africans in South Africa, especially African workers, have increasingly been legislated into objects'!

What was the approach in Durban Strikes to what Hyman described as 'self-assertiveness', displayed so spectacularly and bravely in 1973, and soon reflected in the creation of further unions, and changes in labour legislation? But what also of 'containment' that Hyman identifies in even a victory for full trade union rights? Confronting Hyman's favourable, and also challenging, comments are necessary to understand the purpose of the authors through this book in 1973. These questions are, therefore, also important in evaluating labour struggles and history over the next 50 years in relation to the 1973 intentions, proposals and hopes.

The general purpose and the specific recommendations in the book can confidently be described as reformist – especially if measured against increasing calls for socialism or social democracy; and certainly, against revolutionary calls made from exile. It can also be contrasted with the growing importance of Marxist analyses of historical and contemporary 'racial capitalism' in the country. In other words, following Hyman's use of the term 'containment', calls for extending trade unionism would

appear to be a long way off a call for 'revolutionary change' and 'armed struggle' in the country. Hyman himself concludes his review, with this qualification, even of 'containment':

Even this [incorporation of African workers into legal labour relations practices, or containment] may well be insufficient. Where class antagonism is overlaid by racial oppression, the institutionalization of conflict [containment] through trade unionism alone may prove impossible (italics added).

I will, therefore, briefly discuss the 'Recommendations' as much as they reveal the aim of the research and of the book, that was presented. They come, in chapter 5, after an introduction to 'the actual shop-floor function' of any trade union and unionists, serving as a brief lesson to a general readership. What is stated, as well as elsewhere in the book, is that it is not a 'lack of communication' that leads to strikes. Even though it was, and is, a very widely circulating notion, always present in explaining the conflict in the management-labour relationship. But, rather, the systemic power imbalance in the workplace that results in the withdrawal of labour. Durban Strikes notes that workers who had been interviewed indicated that grievances had been communicated long before the strikes occurred; as they had at the Coronation strike. Instead, the vastly unequal power relationship between owners and managers, on the one hand, and workers, on the other, lay at the root of the issues: in essence, capitalism.

The limits of perceptions of the workplace and of workers, of labour relations, aggravated by embedded racial stereotypes and racism of state and 'opposition' (the United Party) positions are presented. The NP position is illustrated in Durban Strikes through then exiting discriminatory legislation, and two quite different arguments advanced during apartheid: the first in the Botha Commission, which reported in 1951, shortly after the NP came to power. It rejected '"the complete social and political equality of all races"', and thus of inclusion of Africans in existing unions. It did, nonetheless, propose African trade union rights, which was rejected by the new National Party government. Second, 21 years later, the 'Van der Merwe Plan', referring to a proposal

by professor P.J. Van der Merwe, presented in a talk he delivered to the conservative Trade Union Council of South Africa (Tucsa) conference in 1972. This proposal was made, interestingly, from within the parameters set by the Bantustan policy, envisaging separate (and even 'independent') governments, and thus African workers as 'citizens of Homelands' and thus 'foreign migrants' to 'white South Africa' and its industries. This would mean that the ethnic 'governments' would create their own 'internal' labour legislation, and would negotiate with the apartheid government to establish rules affecting 'their citizens' (173-5).

In conclusion to this introduction to the recommendations, the authors speak to 'Trade Unions', returning to the 'functions' of trade unions within a capitalist order, addressing the 'asymmetrical dependence' of employer and worker, and the institutional place of unions, strikes, pickets, etc. It is worth noting, that the authors acknowledge that workers are not only workers, but that conflicting interests may exist within the working class and be experienced amongst them, the most important of which exist at the core of racial capitalism itself: competition between workers in finding employment, skill differentials, and also race. I have already mentioned the introduction of ethnicity into the workplace and into organisational strategies. Recommendations by the authors of Durban Strikes, concluding chapter 5, start with an overall point:

Professor PJ (Piet) van der Merwe, then in the University of Pretoria Economics Department, 'in 1979 he became deputy chairman of the National Manpower Commission. He was also a member of the Wiehahn Commission' (see https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/61/ZP_Files/2021/department-of-economics-100-year-history.zp209884.pdf).

Trade unions, with the right to organize freely, and to use the strike weapon as a last resort, organized on democratic lines, and possessing their own sanctions over members, are the precondition for industrial peace in South Africa. Only full trade unions can integrate African workers into the industrial economy in such a way that they will begin to co-operate wholeheartedly in its development. (179-80, italics added) The important specific proposals are directed at:

African workers should reject the existing 'liaison committees' and 'works committees' as adequate, although 'they should attempt to manipulate them' (181); 'should form Trade Unions, as, even though they remained unofficial [under then existing conditions], these are the best means available to workers for the defence of their rights' (181); and these should be open to all workers.

Employers are advised 'that it is in the long-term interests of both employers and workers that there be adequate institutional forms for dealing with inevitable industrial conflict through peaceful 'negotiations'. All are warned of international union actions against the apartheid state and specifically foreign companies investing in South Africa (183-5).

Registered trade unions, protected at the time on both skill and race bases, should give advice and assistance to new unions, and pressure employers where they have already organised; and where they have representation, such as at industrial council meetings, they should 'ensure that all fringe benefits are extended to African workers'. However, they should not try to control the African union. … There exist independent bodies such as the [IIE], the Urban Training Project and Central Administration Services, which offer valuable facilities to African unions [which] should be supported as one means of ensuring the independence of African unions from domination by the existing registered unions (187-8). Here, the existence of inter-related activities in support of African workers mentioned earlier are raised.
'Homeland Governments', clearly with the KwaZulu version in mind, are reminded that while state policy sees workers as properly belonging

in those ethnic territories (as 'citizens'), this is not the case, in fact, as they labour beyond the ethnic creations; but that, within their devolved powers, they could recognise branches, provide 'technical and financial assistance', appeal to employers to recognise unions, and make clear to those located in these territories that unions are legal, albeit with limited participatory rights [189-90].

Finally, 'The Government' is reminded, quoting professor Sheila van der Horst's 'remark [in a SAIRR sheet] that "one cannot and should not rely on the decency, religion or social responsibility (or anything else) of either employers or employees to bring about social justice … it is the function of Governments to govern and to provide a framework to ensure that employers' and employees' actions conform to the public interest"' [190]. The authors, however, draw attention to the political context of white domination that shapes notions of justice in SA. In this context, conflict is inevitable and increasing, and peaceful resolution is less likely: In such circumstances, a government has two alternatives. It can attempt to hold back the process of change by increased repression. Or it can resign itself to the necessity of making creative compromises, compromises which will retain for the time being some aspects of White privilege, but will at the same time begin to integrate African workers into the society. (191)

'Reformist' certainly, calling for the 'institutionalization of conflict' in the arguments made both to capital and the state. However, to label Durban Strikes as 'reformist' is inadequate without locating it as a strategy, within the pervasive political repression and restrictions of the time, chosen within limited options – direct participants in even the Durban strikes project were banned. Rick Turner was assassinated a few years later because he was perceived to be central to much of the political ferment in the region and nationally. Steve Biko was murdered because he was perceived also to inform struggle, widely and effectively. What was the progressive 'politics of the possible' during these years? Eddie Webster alerted me to an appropriate qualification that he had used, looking back 20 years after the strikes, namely to characterise Rick Turner's approach to analysis and activism as radical reform. This

clearly applies to Turner's Eye of the Needle, published the year before Durban Strikes, and the strategic arguments and initiatives he took in several areas then and later. Webster writes: 'Turner's combination of a radical vision with a strategy was to have a profound impact on the intense debates in the early seventies on economic growth and social and political change' (emphasis added). That 'radicalism' is there also in the call for member-driven democracy in the trade unionism proposed as a goal. In 2022 I was invited to reflect on Turner's Eye of the Needle (importantly subtitled: towards participatory democracy in South Africa) published 50 years earlier, at an event organised by the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies (SCIS). I referred to the method of 'utopian thinking' for which Turner argues in the book. It demands, as Webster noted, a 'radical vision' – which Turner presented as a challenge towards a South Africa beyond race and racism, and one in which participatory democracy and socialism would be the goal. The strategy is that of practical reform on a shared journey to the 'utopian' vision. In Durban Strikes, too, participatory democracy in the proposed unionisation is foregrounded, as is a critical view of the dehumanising and exploitative history of capitalism in southern Africa and as a system everywhere. Rick Turner's first step was, in both instances, to speak to a range of potential participants, by arguing that it was both necessary and possible.

See Billy Keniston (2013) Choosing to be Free: the life story of Rick Turner. Johannesburg: Jacana. Argued for in his (Webster 1993) 'Rick Turner memorial lecture', and is valuable to an understanding of the Durban Moment, to which he adds the presence of 'class theory and the new labour studies' (1993:2). Also see Webster's contribution – '"Exodus without a map": what happened to the Durban Moment?' – delivered at a 'Symposium in honour of Vishnu Padayachee', July 2022. Forthcoming in SA Historical Journal.

Fifty years later What do we want from such reminders of things past, in this case, events that took place half a century ago? Nostalgia possibly, if you were one of the thousands who took their futures into their own hands in early 1973; one of the tens of thousands who lived under the conditions inflicted on those racialised as non-citizens, as inferior, as available under massively discriminatory conditions as 'labour'; as people who could see who the beneficiaries were of their daily effort. But, who, yet, acted and had ideas on what could be. However, the authors and other participants in the creation of Durban Strikes, who are aware of the historical date in 2023, will find a somewhat different set of memories: of commitments, visions, hope, expectations, and effort over the next couple of decades, until 1990 and the achievement of an inclusive representative democracy. We were of a different class location, after all.

What were those hopes, what were the commitments and engagements, and what are the retrospective assessments? And that is why, earlier, I wished that all those who were around would present their subsequent experiences and satisfactions and disappointments – with an assessment of why.

Durban, and South Africa, were in major ways, more than can be listed, a different world from that which exists in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. The changes are impossible fully to capture in their complex inter-relationship, globally and locally. But we desperately need to reflect on them: some in new expressions of what was imagined then, others unimaginable 50 years ago. The strikes that have come to define 1973 took place in a smaller ideological and political space. The enemy was clearly 'Apartheid' – with a capital letter – as a system: even if an articulation of race, gender, capitalism, and with ethnicity and tradition unfolding in ways that broke with past forms of domination. Resistance, defined by a common enemy, took different forms then; but was measured mostly against agreed-upon criteria. In 1990 Tony Morphet, a University of Natal (Durban) lecturer, labelled the late-1960s and early-1970s as 'the Durban Moment'. This evocative term, oft-repeated since, drew primarily on what was

happening in the university during this period, and referred directly to political science lecturer Rick Turner, murdered in 1978, and to medical student and Black Consciousness founder Steve Biko, killed in 1977 a few months earlier. These names came to signify a set of socially formative influences, geographically and socially much wider than what was then unfolding in just Natal province. Yes, it was a period of intellectual ferment, especially at the University of Natal (Durban), in several disciplines amongst staff and students. But, as the strikes certainly signified, activism and 'agitation' was to be national. The period of the Durban Moment in this wider recognition that is clearly called for is also distinguishable from the preceding years of intensified repression of most forms of visibly organised resistance. Repressive measures can, however, also – correctly – be read as signs of ongoing opposition to forms of racist domination and exploitation. The authors of the fifth volume of From Protest to Challenge appropriately, in retrospect, sub-titled it Nadir and resurgence, 1964-1979, to capture both repressive apartheid state action through most of the 1960s, and also indicating that therefore subsequent oppositional events and social action were especially significant. Resistance took a variety of forms, challenging power in labour and cultural and community life. Black Consciousness initiatives from the late 1960s (Biko was then studying at the medical school at the UND, and several other student leaders were to be found in Durban); white students' seemingly unlikely, but innovative, labour activism through 'Wages Commissions', spreading nationally from UND and UNP – set off initially by concerns with wages for black workers on campuses; Soweto 1976 which thrust youth politics and school education to the frontline; trade unions and labour action grew; a proliferation of community and religious organisations came into existence, acting often in collaboration with worker campaigns; to name a few. Change was in the air; youthful energy was present; individuals from older generations with their own histories constructively engaged, but also brought in confusions and allegiances from the past and from commitments to politics taking place in and from exile. The formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the early 1980s well illustrates such interaction of multiple forms of opposition to apartheid that developed from the late-1960s.

It has to be noted that in 1973 there was no internet, cell phones or personal computers. That has to be taken into account towards an understanding of the day-to-day forms of interaction, of planning, of publicity, of organisational types, of the nature of trust that operated then. This explains in part the importance that Turner, and then labour and political organisers, attached to direct democracy. And why the discussion of participatory forms of democracy featured in discussions and practices. Distanced, virtual, hybrid practices today have created new forms, and shaped, too, our return to understanding the past.

Morphet's 1990 'Turner memorial lecture' (with first appearance in Theoria) is available in Richard Turner (2015). A more inclusive 'Durban Moment' would also include specifics such as the Wages Commission (first launched in 1971 at UND), the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund, the IIE, and further organisational activism. On student-related radicalism, which then also includes union and social activism, see, for example, Glenn Moss' memoir (2014); and https://www.thenewradicals.com/. For a tribute to Morphet, see John Higgins at https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-05-10-tony-morphet-1940-2021-the-durban-moment-public-intellectual-who-merged-social-and-civic-life/; also Xolela Mangcu at https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/Durban_Moment_Abstract_Xolela_Mangcu.pdf Thomas G Karis and Gail M Gerhart (series editors) (revised and up-dated by Gail M Gerhart) (2013) From Protest to Challenge: nadir and resurgence, 1964-1979. Johannesburg: Jacana. Read especially, in relation to Durban Strikes, the article by David Lewis (2013:194-225) 'Black workers and trade unions'. Lewis has a sub-heading 'Survival years: 1964-1972' in this overview. Scanning through the documents in the collection reveals the span of resistance. In addition, Brian du Toit (1975), researching in the Natal region at the time, also provides useful social and economic background information in his article, 'written in Durban during the current strikes'.

What does 1973 demand of us in 2023? What relevance do the calls then on the working class to lead struggles against apartheid have today? How has the form of inclusive constitutional democracy fared since 1994 measured against the previous calls for participatory democracy; what about trade unions and trade unionism? Where do we stand with regard to the equality, safety and economic and political location of women? How do we rate education at all levels, when the claims were made so forcibly in 1976? And so on. I will refer to three conditions, as they might encompass most of the multiple forms in which the demands of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, for a future, present themselves: inequality; the climate catastrophe; and recognising the absence of easily identifiable social cohorts as agents for fundamental change.

Göran Therborn rewrote, originally in 1980, for me and many others how to rethink 'the ideology of power and the power of ideology', in a book of that name. More recently, in 2013, he tackled inequality, again in the same condensed and readable style. Therborn proposes that inequality should not be measured purely in material terms – what he calls resource inequality. But, if it is to be addressed effectively, inequality should also be measured in terms of vital inequality (that relates to the body, health, survival rates, etc), and then existential inequality.

The last fairly obviously refers to gender and race, but not exclusively. Applying measures of existential, vital and resource inequality to South Africa (SA) today, we fail miserably, especially if we take into account the aims of the struggle against racial capitalism that informed 1973.

See such as Ian MacQueen (2018).

There are daily occurrences of brutal violence against women, so common that an acronym, 'GBV', is sufficient to convey meaning. Hierarchies of difference fill this nation-state. A failing and failed public health system characterises life for poor people in all provinces. Gini-coefficient numbers place us at the bottom level globally. How can I read in a newspaper about children dying of hunger in the Eastern Cape in 2022?

The climate catastrophe – global warming, droughts, rising ocean levels, and the rapidly increasing devastation through 'extreme weather events' – were not in the public consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s. Sure, we spoke about 'weather', and heat, and drought, but that had nothing to do with present common knowledge that much of life on the planet is doomed, if not already extinct, through human activity: unless we accept measures that we have no intention of accepting. This is, unfortunately, not the space to raise the implications, already experienced by millions globally, and the numerous actions required and the similar number of social obstacles that make it near meaningless: obstacles include such basic aspects of our existence as democracy, the nation-state, nationalism, short-term thinking, notions of growth, consumerism, capitalism, enough and too much, and on and on. Finally, here, and related to the previous two, why is there at present hardly thought of who credible agents of major and effective change could be? In 1973, firmly founded in Marxist and broadly 'left' thinking and practice globally, the working class was argued, and accepted, to be the agent, around which notions of material, political and social existence were ***(thought)*** and discussed. Trade unions, organisations of the working class, and related

political parties were to be stepping stones towards a world beyond capitalism. Remember? What is the 'working class' in 2023, what is the present and future forms of 'work', and where are 'trade unions' in relation to emancipatory visions? How are these questions addressed in South Africa and globally? And how would the answers relate to issues of inequality (vital, existential and resource), agency, and the

climate catastrophe?

In his mapping of left theory in the twentieth century, Razmig Keucheyan makes the following important point, one I argue is of direct relevance to looking back at 1973 and what seemed, to many, to be obvious then. But also, to identify the challenges for 2023 and the future: With its turbulence, today's world resembles the one in which classical Marxism emerged. In other respects, it is significantly different – above all, no doubt, in the absence of a clearly identified 'subject of emancipation'. At the start of the twentieth century, Marxists could count on powerful working class organizations, of which there were often leaders, and whose activity was going to make it possible to surmount what was supposedly one of the ultimate crises of capitalism. Nothing similar exists at present or, probably, for the immediate future. How, in the light of this, are we to continue thinking radical social transformation? Such is the challenge facing contemporary critical theories. (2014:4) And such is the task confronting us as we think back to the working class action in Durban '73. Thinking can no longer be contained within specific disciplines, problems, claims and demands. It certainly can no longer be focused on humans only.

I have just read, from the Nelson Mandela Foundation release, on Sep 7, 2022, of 'three disturbing figures that are well reported. "In South Africa's largest corporations, women in top leadership positions earn 72 cents for every 1 Rand earned by their male counterparts"; "One study based on samples from Gauteng Province found that 51 per cent of the women surveyed reported that they have experienced gender-based violence"; and "women account for nearly 63 per cent of all new HIV infections."'

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Chapter 1

THE STRIKES

A. Durban

The city of Durban is the third-largest in South Africa and is the major port. Population figures (1970) for the Durban metropolitan area (Durban/Pinetown are as follows:

African	---	395 396
Coloured	---	5 014
Indian	---	329 872
White	---	264 310
		1 034 602

According to estimates by Bantu Administration officials, (NM, 5/4/73), the figure given for the African population is far too low and the Durban/Pinetown area now has an african population of nearly 1 000 000. The same article said that there are more than 161 000 Africans employed in Durban alone, and, though there appear to be no accurate statistics for the whole industrial complex, there may well be over 200 000 Africans employed. Wilson estimated that in 1971 there were at least 100 000 migrant workers in the complex, “And these figures make no allowance for all those working illegally in Durban and for the tens of thousands of squatters, not all migrants - living outside Durban’s boundaries in such places as Inanda” (Wilson (2) p.59).

Thus, about one in two of the Africans working in Durban are probably migrants; that is, workers brought in from the rural areas on an annual contract basis. But most of these are “permanent migrants” who in fact work all their lives in the city on regularly renewed contracts but are legally considered to be rural, and have no permanent residential rights in the urban areas. At least 30 000 employed in the Durban/ Pinetown area are domestic workers.
Strict residential segregation is practised. The most important african

townships are Umlazi to the south of Durban, Kwa Mashu to the north and Clermont outside the New Germany/Pinetown area. The Durban/Pinetown area is the second most important industrial area in South Africa with a share of some 12% of nett national manufacturing output during the early 1960's. This figure has probably not changed appreciably. The fastest-growing industry groups in Durban/Pinetown area are food, textiles, clothing, paper and printing, non-metallic mineral products (i.e., bricks and tiles, crushed stones etc), electrical machinery and chemicals and petroleum products, (Natal Regional Survey vol. 14, part 2).

The other major industrial area that will be mentioned in the survey is the Hammarsdale complex. Hammarsdale is situated about 40 kilometres west of Durban and has about 14 established factories. These are mainly clothing and textile firms and are located adjacent to an African Reserve in pursuance of the Government's "border industries" policy. The Mpumalanga township at Hammarsdale has a population of about 32 000 but workers come as far as 30 kilometres away. The wages in the "border industrial areas" are on the whole considerably lower than those industries situated in the urban areas.

B. A brief History of the Strikes

The wave of strikes began at the Coronation Brick and Tile Company, a brickworks in a minor industrial area on the northern outskirts of Durban. Here the entire African workforce, nearly 2 000 workers, went on strike on the morning of 9 January 1973. Their demand was for an increase in the minimum cash wage from R8,97 to R20,00 per week. Before long, this demand escalated to R30,00 per week. A weekly cash wage of R8,97 is clearly low. However, in terms of general wage levels, it was not staringly low – certainly not low enough to explain why Coronation employees, a relatively isolated compound-house group, were the first to down tools. Two supplementary factors, both relating to expectation of wage increases, may offer some explanation.
The first was an investigation into the brick and clay industry carried out by the Wage Board, the Government-appointed body which sets

minimum wage rates for workers not otherwise covered. This had been conducted in the early part of 1972, but at the time of the strike, no report or recommendation had as yet been made by the Board.

The previous minimum had been in effect since 1967. The majority of workers were probably unaware both of the fact of the investigation and of the considerable delay in the revision of minimum wages for the industry, although at least some workers may have become aware of a pending revision through the action of the Durban Students' Wages Commission, which had compiled evidence on the industry for presentation to the Wage Board.

The second factor was a speech delivered to the workers by Paramount Chief Goodwill Zwelithini, during his visit to the factory in the latter part of 1972. It is not clear whether the Prince had merely indicated a willingness to negotiate on behalf of the workers or whether he had indicated actual management agreement to increase wages. In any event, there is little doubt that his speech had left many workers with a more or less firm expectation that the new year would bring higher wages.

Workers on the Number 1 plant report that the strike began when they were awakened at 3:00 am by a group of their fellows and were told to gather at the main football stadium, instead of reporting for work. An informal deputation went from this main plant to outlying depots in the neighbouring suburb of Avoca and persuaded the workers there to join with the main body at the stadium.

A high-spirited and positive response marked this early phase of the strike. Not one man from the main plant ignored the call to strike; workers from Avoca plants marched to the stadium in two long columns, with a rather stirring disregard for the heavy traffic and legal restrictions. When they finally surged through the stadium gates, they were chanting "Filumuntu ufesadikiza", meaning "Man is dead but his

spirit lives".

The only reported incident of intimidation was of minimal proportion. A group of five workers apparently attempted to leave the stadium during the course of the first morning of the strike. Some threatening gestures were made by the workers near them, and the five promptly reseated themselves (RDM, 10/1/73). Nevertheless, the initial reaction of the management was to blame the whole thing on "agitators" and "intimidation". These themes were embodied in a notice put out to the workers by the Coronation management on the day before the strike. It essentially made the following points:

(a) That the talk of a strike on the following day was the work of Communist agitators;
(b) That loyal workers who routinely came to work would be protected from intimidation;
(c) That the ringleaders would be severely punished

The notice was angrily rejected by the workers. One of these went so far as to claim, "We would not have gone on strike if this notice had not called us "Communists'", (DN, 9/1/73). The immediate consequence of the clause concerning ringleaders was that workers who had proved themselves, in the course of the strike, to be reasonably articulate and confident were reluctant to coalesce into a readily identifiable group. Nor were they prepared to assume an ongoing individual prominence. The Coronation notice exemplified a management stance that could be described as threatening. It is within that context that one needs to assess subsequent claims by management and others that African workers, especially in a strike situation, were inchoate and impossible to negotiate with.

Despite the "ringleaders will be punished" notice of the 8th, the acting general manager of Coronation declared himself, on the evening of the 9th, neither willing nor able "to negotiate with 1 500 workers on a football field" (NM, 11/1/73), and insisted that the workers elect a committee. One worker responded: "Our terms are quite clear. We

don’t need a committee. We need R30,00 a week”. In short, the fear of victimisation by employers appears to have been a more pronounced feature of the strike than the much publicised “fear of intimidation”.

Efforts by the Bantu Labour Department to break the impasse were no more successful. When the Bantu Labour Officer for Durban enjoined the massed workers to form a committee he was met with a thunderous "No, never". This showed the difficulties facing a White government official, particularly in a time of stress attempting to win the trust of black workers sufficiently to represent their interests to management. This early display of the workers' lack of confidence in the Bantu Labour Officers was to be repeated time after time as the wave of strikes spread through Durban.

It is worth noting that a works committee was reportedly in existence at Coronation at the time of the strike, (DN, 12/1/73). Its complete ineffectiveness in terms of representativeness, activity or conflict-resolving power is another indication of the inadequacy of the official dispute-settling machinery.

It was finally the intervention of a traditional Zulu figure strike which broke the deadlock of the first day of the strike. This was Paramount Chief Goodwill Zwelithini, whose previous contact with the Coronation workers has already been mentioned. There are conflicting reports as to precisely how the Paramount Chief became involved in the dispute. Early reports that he had been called in as a mediator by the Department of Labour were later categorically denied by the Department. Other reports stated that he had intervened on his own initiative. In the event, there is no doubt that both the Department of Labour and the Coronation management were happy with the results of the Chief's address to the workers. This took place on the afternoon of the second strike day. In an hour-long talk, the Chief appealed to the workers to return to work and undertook to negotiate with management on their behalf.

The Paramount Chief's proposals did not elicit a very enthusiastic

response from the 2 000 workers then gathered on the field. A central reason for this might have been that a decision on their wages would only be made the following Wednesday, one week hence. They felt, as one worker said, that "You cannot extinguish fire by words, but by action", and feared that if they agreed to return before a settlement was reached, the initiative would be lost. The Chief's proposals were accepted only after his representative, Prince Sithela Zulu, reminded the workers "that if they could not trust in the Chief's word, this would 'lower the dignity'" (NM, 11/1/73.)

The “dignity" aspect was referred to by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, head of the KwaZulu Executive Council, who advised the Paramount Chief not to become involved in controversial issues in case the image of the Zulu Royal House should be tarnished. Possibly Chief Buthelezi was concerned also to preserve the authority of the Executive Council on matters such as labour disputes involving its citizens. A minor flurry of exchanges between the two Chiefs followed, with no explicit conclusion. A tacit agreement on role delimitation may, however, have influenced the Paramount Chief's decision not to meet the Coronation directors on Wednesday, the 17th as planned; instead, he would attend the opening of the 1973 session of the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly. This development was announced on Sunday, the 14th. On the same day, an eleven-man wage delegation was elected by the workers. It was headed by Nathaniel Zulu, who had emerged as a prominent spokesman during the strike, despite the possibility of victimisation. There were, however, no reports of meetings between management and the full committee. The committee leader was apparently called to the office of the acting general manager early on Monday, but other members of the committee and the workers, in general, remained unaware of this move. One presumes, therefore, that workers enjoyed rather limited representation in any bargaining process that did occur. The Coronation management, then, although seriously affected by the strike itself, appears to have acted fairly autonomously in the revision of wage rates.

Nonetheless, the worker body, in general, indicated its resistance

and determination by rejecting the company's first offer, on Tuesday afternoon, of a R1,50 per week increase. On the next day, a second offer of a R2,07 increase (bringing the minimum to R11,50 per week) was grudgingly assented to.

Tight security arrangements accompanied this second offer. The workers were kept isolated on a plant basis and company officials moved from one plant to the next, making their offer. This tactic was obviously designed to prevent the likelihood of another mass rejection on the football field. The officials were escorted by a considerable force of police in land rovers and riot trucks. Although all plants accepted the offer, it was clear that extensive dissatisfaction with the new rates remained.

Although the Corporation workers themselves were relatively isolated in the Company compounds the strike was widely reported in the local press. Banner headlines were accompanied by photographs of the workers massed on the football field or marching down the road carrying a red flag – for traffic control, rather than a sign of political allegiance. This strike, with its relatively successful outcome, must have influenced the later events.

Even before it had been resolved several minor strikes had broken out elsewhere. The first of these was an apparently brief and unsuccessful stoppage at the transport firm of A.J Keeler on the 10th of January, the morning after the Coronation strike began. This strike was triggered by what the workers considered to be a derisory pay-offer of an increase of 50c per week. The manager blamed the strike on agitators and the workers were back within 45 minutes. On the following day, a more sustained strike began at the small tea-pacing firm of T.W. Beckett and Co. Here about 150 workers went on strike, demanding an increase of R3,00 per week. The management reacted by calling in the police and dismissing all those who refused to turn to work. There were no negotiations. According to one of the workers, "We were given ten minutes to make a decision", (RDM 12/1/73). About 100 workers decided not to return to work. However, the following Tuesday the

management let it be known that they would consider reinstating the dismissed workers, although still at the old pay-levels. The Managing Director issued a press statement in which he said that his company tried to provide good labour conditions and that they had no inkling that anything was amiss: “I believe that our wages are competitive by prevailing Durban standards, and although we are governed by a wage determination which is R10,00 compared with the R8,50 stipulated”, (RDM 16/1/73). Most of the workers nevertheless remained out, and finally, on the 25th of January, two weeks after the strike had begun, the firm announced a R3,00 per week increase for all workers. Most of the workers were reinstated, but, according to the company, “We took this opportunity to weed what we considered bad material”.

In this dispute, it seems to have been the Department of Labour which encouraged the firm to take an initial hard line. According to a press report it was on the Department’s advice that strikes were paid-off in the first place (RDM 25/1/73). The Divisional Inspector, Mr. G. Jackson, pointed out that the workers could be prosecuted for having deserted their employment (RDM 13/1/73). However, in the event, no action was taken.

Whilst the Beckett strike was in progress, African ships painters at several firms, including J.H. Akitt Co. and James Brown and Hamer had also gone on strike. These workers were earning R2,60 per day but claimed that they often only worked three days a week, and so needed an increase of 90c in their daily wage. These workers stayed out for several days, but it was not reported whether they finally received an increase. One more of the companies involved considered the possibility of replacing them with convict labour in order to complete urgent contracts. A spokesman for James Brown and Hamer said, "I don't know who mooted this idea first, but it is worth looking into. We would otherwise have to get white workers, who use sprays -but this work is difficult in windy conditions. It is worth looking into the idea of using convict labour -they are used by the Railways to clean the harbour area", (DN 16/1/73). Fortunately for all concerned this idea was taken no further.

Although at this stage there were still only scattered strikes, even these were considered a sufficiently remarkable phenomenon in South Africa to occasion a wide range of comment. Both the Afrikaans Sunday newspaper, Rapport, and the SABC called for improvements in Black wages. A number of prominent Black and White trade unionists predicted further unrest. Chief Buthelezi attacked low wages and called for full trade union right for African workers. He strongly criticised employers who met strikes with dismissals: "Firing people in these circumstances points to the insecurity of black people in general. This kind of insecurity is dangerous because blacks might ultimately ask themselves what have we to lose" S.Times 14/1/73).

The police also commented on the strikes, and in particular on the allegations that they were the work of agitators. On the 18th of January the Natal security police head, Colonel Steenkamp, said "So far we have no evidence to indicate that there is anything organised" (NM 18/1/73). Three days later the Sunday Express claimed that senior police officers "had not ruled out" the possibility of overseas involvement in the strikes, but also quoted a further denial from Colonel Steenkamp that there was any evidence of organisation.

The last of the minor strikes began on Monday the 22nd of January, 200 African convoy drivers employed by the Pinetown firm of Motorvia went on strike and organised a picket. They were demanding an increase to R40,00 per week. Management and workers put out conflicting statements about their current wages. Managers claimed that the wage varied between R20,00 - R25,00 per week, but some of the drivers claimed that they were only guaranteed R15,00 per week, and sometimes did not even earn that. The management called in the police, and on the following morning dismissed 250 workers after they had refused the first offer made by the company. A further offer was made. The workers remained on the premises through the Tuesday and the Wednesday.

They made a new demand for a guaranteed R15,00 per week, and a minimum of R5,00 per convoy driven. They also elected a five-man

delegation who lodged a complaint about the firm with the Pinetown Bantu Administration Department. Desultory negotiations continued via the indunas (African foremen), and the managers once more threatened to dismiss the already dismissed workers if they did not accept his last pay offer. Many of the workers agreed to return to work, but nearly 100 were dismissed on the 25th.

It was on Thursday the 25th that what had been a trickle of strike action began to turn into a wave when a series of large factories in Pinetown-New Germany industrial complex were closed down by strikes. The move began at the Frametex textile factory in New Germany, where, according to trade union officials, there had long been dissatisfaction with wages and conditions. At 8:00 am that morning the workers left their machines and gathered in an open yard in the factory. They were invited by loudhailer to elect a negotiating committee, and return to work pending a settlement. They laughed at this and refused. Their demand was for R20,00 per week, in comparison with the R5,00 -R9,00 per week that they claimed they were getting at the time. As in most other cases, management and workers made contradictory claims about current wage levels, but it is clear that these workers were receiving particularly low wages. By the following day, Friday, the strike had spread to all the other Frame Group factories in the area and affected about 6,000 African workers, as well as many Indian workers. The workers were offered a small cost of living increase but rejected the offer. On Monday there was a mass meeting at which a further offer of increases, ranging from R1,75 to R3,00 was made. The workers accepted this and returned to work. Meanwhile, however, the strike had spread to workers at two other large Frame factories, including Natal Canvas and Rubber in Durban itself, and also to several other factories in Pinetown and New Germany.

The picture was complicated further by widespread rumours of a forthcoming transport boycott. The first report of a possible train boycott appeared on the 27th of January. It was stated that a number of firms had phoned the Daily News and/or the Railway Police to say that some of their African workers had told them that there would be

a boycott of trains on the 1st of February. The police announced the following day that they were investigating the rumour, and there were also reports that pamphlets calling for a boycott had been distributed in one of the main African residential areas, Umlazi. By the 31st the rumour was receiving wide publicity and, in the heated atmosphere, caused speculation of all kinds. The police were already taking action to "protect commuters against intimidators". On the night before the boycott, many firms were reported to have made preparations for their workers to sleep on the premises, and the Durban Corporation decided to waive the curfew regulations which make it illegal for Africans without permanent accommodation in the city, or special permits, to be in white areas between 11:30 pm and 4:00 am. On the morning itself, the police engaged in a massive show of strength in the african townships.

The Natal Mercury reported in Kwa Mashu that “more than 400 policemen started patrolling at 2:00 am. Police vans were at most bus stops and a strong force of police was on duty at railway stations. A convoy of fast mini-riot trucks was on constant patrol in the streets”. Although this drama delayed the start of the early morning rush, there was no boycott. Nevertheless, the incident almost certainly strengthened the strike movement, even if only by spreading the idea of direct action. From the 31st, the strike wave gathered momentum and began spreading into all parts of the Durban/Pinetown industrial complex.

On the 31st, work stopped at another major Frame factory, Consolidated Textile Mills (CTM), in the south Durban industrial area of Jacobs-Mobeni. The Department of Labour's Bantu Labour Officer, Mr. J. Skene, appealed to them to return to work. Their negotiating committee was also asked to get them back to work while negotiations were in progress, but refused to do so. They sang Nkosi Sikelele iAfrika, and were finally locked-out and sent home, but not before they had encouraged workers at the neighbouring Consolidated Fine Spinners and Weavers, and Consolidated Woolwashing and Processing Mills (CWPM) to join them. A number of smaller firms also came out on

the same day, and as the strike spread even further on Thursday the 1st the day of the rumoured transport boycott, the press gave up the attempt to give detailed coverage of each strike. The Natal Mercury printed a list of 29 firms which had been affected by strikes during the month of January.

By this time the strike wave was the major daily new story in nearly all South African newspapers, and it was evident that it could develop into a major confrontation. Employers' representatives from Durban had flown down to Cape Town, where Parliament was assembling for the new session, to hold urgent talks with the Government. On the 2nd, the Minister of Labour issued a statement implying that the strikes were the responsibility of agitators: "The strikes in Natal follow a pattern from which it is clear that it is not merely a question of high wages. There is every indication that this is a planned action and strikers are being used to achieve more than an increase in wages... The action and unwillingness of the workers to negotiate shows undoubtedly that the agitation for trade unions is not the solution and is merely a smokescreen behind which other motives are hidden. "(NM 2/2/73). Other people had different theories. Most of the english-language newspapers attacked the Minister's statement. The official organ of the Natal National Party, Die Nataller, laid the blame on "shocking wages" paid by Natal industrialists, and headlined "Employers Must Take Full Blame". But it did add that there were "certain undermining elements" who "have spotted the favourable climate for their activities and are busy to exploit it" (DN 3/2/73).

The General Secretary of the Building Workers' Union (an all-White union), blamed former Cabinet Minister, Theo Gerdener, and unspecified White apostles of the left, but most spokesmen for registered trade unions blamed the strikes on the employers. However, the director of the S.A. Institute of Personnel Management blamed the strikes on the registered unions, for not having consulted management (Star 31/1/73). The President of the Durban Chamber of Commerce said that it was the fault of the "incredible" slowness of the statutory wage adjusting machinery, (DN 31/1/73), On the whole, the

english-language press in Natal blamed the employers for the situation and were particularly critical of the textile magnate, Mr. Philip Frame. They reported the strikes with a great deal of sympathy, carrying many interviews with individual workers who expressed their grievances freely. By the beginning of February, as it became clear that the strikes could spread even further, the newspapers began to counsel caution to the workers. The Daily News wrote on the 1st: "the confrontation between management and labour in the Durban area has driven home a number of valid points. Now is the time to cool it… Now is the time to get off the escalator and begin the less exciting but more rewarding task of fundamental reform."

Throughout the first two weeks of February, strikes were out and ending all over Durban. On Monday, the 5th, the most tense and dramatic period began when 3,000 African workers employed by the Durban Corporation stopped work, affecting road and drain works, the cleaning department, and the electricity department. They were demanding a R10,00 per week increase on an average wage of R13,00. This strike spread rapidly to other Corporation departments involving 16,000 workers despite an offer of a R2,00 increase made by the Corporation on Tuesday morning. In some departments, Indian and African workers work in separate gangs, while in other departments they work together, under white overseers. In both cases many Indian workers joined the strike, while others, according to the Corporation, were sent home for fear of “intimidation”. Although their wage scales are not necessarily the same as those of their African fellow workers, they all get very low wages. In some types of industry, Indian workers do have the right to strike under certain circumstances but this is not the case in the Municipal service, and as such is excluded from those provisions of the Industrial Conciliation Act which permit strikes. This means that both African and Indian workers were acting with equal illegality.

The Corporation strike inevitably had the most dramatic impact on the life of the city. Rubbish began to pile up, the gravediggers were on strike, and by Wednesday the market porters were no longer handling

goods. The abattoir also stopped work, and it became clear that the supply of all perishable foods was threatened. White volunteer “black-legs” were also at work in the market, unloading 80 railway truckloads of fresh produce. According to a press report, “Durban’s Mayor, accompanied by a number of city Councillors, made an on-the-spot- inspection. Also on the scene was a truckload of policemen in camouflage uniforms, swinging batons in one hand and bags of fruit in the other. Striking African workers looked on in amazement as the volunteer workforce turned the market into a scene from My Fair Lady with singing and jokes. Market agencies supplied the volunteer force with beers for their efforts". Meanwhile, the Corporation was asking the state to provide special services to bring essential food supplies to the city if the strike situation worsened.

By Wednesday there were an estimated 30,000 workers on strike, including the 16,000 municipal workers. It seemed possible that the movement might develop into a general strike of all workers in Durban, and strikes were also beginning to occur in other parts of Natal, such as Pietermaritzburg and Port Shepstone. The possibility of violence also seemed to be increasing. Many bands of municipal workers marched through the streets near the city centre, and there were eye-witness reports of minor cases of intimidation. One group stopped a refuse-removal truck and chased the African workers on it. Crowds are also reported to have threatened to burn down the City Engineer's labour office if the African clerks there did not stop working. Helicopters were used over the city, apparently to monitor the progress of marching workers. A contingent of riot police in camouflage dress had been flown in from Pretoria on the previous day and were now patrolling the industrial areas. Although the police had been on hand at most of the strikes, they had as yet taken no action. On Tuesday the officer charge, Brigadier T.M. Bisschoff, told a reporter: "The police have nothing whatsoever against people demanding higher wages - provided they do not break the law". He listed four possible offences: striking; holding a public meeting without a permit; carrying dangerous weapons; and creating a disturbance. However, it was clear that the police did not intend to take any action against strikers, but would confine themselves

to attempting to prevent the other offences. Brigadier Bisschoff also stressed that instructions had been given to use force only if absolutely necessary, and then only the minimum force necessary.

The first incident of this sort occurred on Tuesday. According to press reports, about 1,000 Corporation workers, many armed with sticks, marched from the City Engineer's labour office toward the City Electricity Department, both of which are situated near the centre of Durban. The marchers were surrounded by a large posse of police, armed with stun guns, FN rifles and batons. They failed to disperse when ordered to do so. The police made a baton charge, which the workers did not attempt to resist. Most of them escaped, but 106 were arrested. These appeared in Court the following day and were convicted of "causing a public disturbance". They were fined R30,00 or 30 days, but of this, R25,00 or 25 days was suspended. Later a group of about 150 African building workers, who were moving from site to site in the Durban shopping and business centre, were also arrested. They also received very light sentences. On other occasions, police stopped marching groups and asked them to surrender their sticks, but took no other action. The sticks were to be returned when the march was over.

The only other significant clash occurred in the nearby border industrial area of Hammarsdale. Here all the 7,000 workers employed in 12 industries came out on strike on the Tuesday. They were demanding increases of between R3,00 and R5,00 per week. The employers' joint initial offer of R2,00 was rejected, but negotiations continued. The following morning there was a mass meeting of the 7,000 workers near the bus depot, outside the industrial area. They were chanting and waving sticks. On two occasions groups broke away and marched towards the factories. They were intercepted by the police, and on the first occasion were only dispersed with the aid of teargas. No arrests were made after either of these incidents, but later a man was arrested after a group of workers allegedly attacked two women strike-breakers.

On Wednesday the Deputy Minister of Police issued a statement in which he said that as far as the police were concerned the situation in

Durban was in hand. He thanked the Black workers of Durban for their co-operation, and added that "the police are only there to safeguard the people of Durban from any illegal acts".

Nevertheless, the situation was still explosive. The municipal workers had refused a 15% pay increase. The number of individual factories affected was still increasing, and most of the textile workers were still on strike. In the case of the textile workers, there had been a greater degree of coordination than usual, partly because there is one major employer in the industry, and partly because this was the only major series of strikes in which a registered (i.e., non-African) trade union intervened to try to resolve the issue. The first mass meeting of striking textile workers had taken place at the Textile Workers' Industrial Union (TWIU) headquarters on the previous Saturday afternoon, the 3rd. February. A meeting of 300 African and Indian workers, representing nearly all the strikers, formulated a joint demand for a R5,00 per week increase. One worker told the meeting, "Although I make blankets for Mr. Philip Frame, I can't afford to buy. blankets for my children". Another elderly worker claimed, "We are here today because we have tried to meet our employer, but he doesn't want to talk to us". This was confirmed by Mrs. Harriet Bolton, Secretary of the TWIU, who said, "He is content just to sit tight and stare the workers out with tacit government consent. The African workers want to negotiate with him, but he refuses to meet them. Then he refused to see me when I asked for talks" (S. Tribune 4/1/73).

By Wednesday many of the textile workers had been out for 7 days. A new meeting at Bolton Hall, attended by 800 workers, re-affirmed the call for R500, and one speaker who suggested that they should be willing to accept less was shouted down. But the meeting coincided with a meeting of the Industrial Council for the Textile Industry, at which it became clear that the Frame Group was not willing to increase its initial offer of approximately R2,00. After discussing this further, the mass meeting finally agreed to return to work on the following day.

At the same time, the Corporation workers were given an ultimatum

either to accept a R2,00 across the board increase or else to be dismissed. On Thursday nearly all the municipal workers also returned to work, and by Friday it was clear that the strike wave had broken. There were still many minor strikes in progress, particularly in the furniture industry, which were associated with the fact that a new industrial council agreement was being negotiated at the time, Scattered strikes continued into the following week. In March there were a total of 14 strikes in Natal, involving some 6,000 african workers, and strikes are continuing into 1974 at what would previously have been an unprecedented rate.

C. Strikes in the Textile Industry

The above account gives the sequence of events but does not give any clear idea as to how individual strikes proceeded. Although the main demand was always for improved wages, there were also frequent complaints about working conditions, fringe benefits and employment practices. These need to be looked at in some detail. We have mentioned employer reactions briefly, but these also need to be more carefully analysed. We, therefore, decided to undertake a more thorough investigation of the strikes in one particular industry. We chose the textile industry for two main reasons. Firstly, the strikes in this industry were of a relatively long duration and played an important part in spreading the strike wave. Secondly, this was the only industry in which the registered trade union played any role in trying to settle the strikes. Officials of the TWIU were present at most of the key happenings and were able to provide us with much information. The account which follows is based almost entirely on lengthy interviews with these officials. Unless otherwise specified, all the incidents mentioned were reported by them. Of course, it is probable that their perceptions of the events differ significantly from management perceptions, and the reader should bear this in mind. Nevertheless, two of the officials are also trained social scientists and are, we think, reliable observers. We also interviewed managers from four textile factories, who co-operated with us fully. These interviews dealt with more general aspects of the situation, and are included in our general analysis of employer attitudes.

A number of the most important textile factories in the Durban/Pinetown area are owned by the giant Frame Group, one of the largest groups of its kind in the world. Philip Frame, who controls the Group, received highly unfavourable press treatment during the strikes. However, we believe that his style of management is not as atypical of employers in South Africa as a cursory reading of the press might imply. Although conditions in the Frame factories may have been worse in degree than conditions in certain other factories, they were not different in kind. As Frame himself said in self-defence after the

strikes, “It is unfair to blame one man for what are in fact the faults of an industrial system”. The account which we give of general structural tensions in the industry prior to the strikes, of the specific grievances put forward by the workers and of the way in which the strikes were handled by the employers are also relevant for an understanding of the strikes in other industries.

The textile industry in Natal, as elsewhere, is divided into two labour relations systems: the controlled sector covered by an industrial council which was established before the Second World War and which has a developed industrial relations system; and the cotton sector, which is newly established and in which no wage regulating measure existed at the time of the strikes. It is this sector in particular which has low wages, high labour turnover, and the lack of any communications system between workers and management. Before the Durban strikes took place, the Textile Workers Industrial. Union (which represents Indian and Coloured workers) had its members largely in the blanket sector, although its organiser and research officer had recruited members in the cotton sector. Wages in the textile industry are approximately 20 per cent lower than those in manufacturing as a whole (C.S.I.R., 13). The depressed state of wages in the textile industry was particularly acute in Natal, where large sections of the industry were untouched by the trade union. In both the heavy and the light section of the industry in Natal real wages were in a state of decline. Wages for weavers in the blanket sector remained at R11,40 per week from 1955 to 1962. In 1962 they were increased by 10 cents per week, and in 1966 by 50 cents. Although subsequent wage increases were larger, they did not compensate the weavers for their loss of earnings during the decade 1955 to 1965. Over the period 1955 to 1969 wages increased by about 13,2 per cent while the cost of living measured by the consumer price index rose by 40,8 per cent. Although comparable figures for the cotton section have not been made public, they are considerably lower. At the extensive Frame Cotton Mills in New Germany in 1964 male workers were said to have earned a basic wage of R6,00 with apparently an attendance bonus, (Hansard 5, cols.1754- 5). At the same complex of factories in November 1972 the workers claimed that men earned a

basic wage of R7,00 with R1,00 attendance bonus, and women earned R5,00 with a R1,00 attendance bonus. A survey conducted in July 1972 of about 1,000 pay slips gathered from the workers revealed that the average weekly wage at the Nortex Mill was R7,49 for men and women including all bonuses, and at Seltex Mill R6,64 a week. Many of the women were earning R3,50 basic wage.

In both sections of the industry in Natal, there was very little wage drift at all. Although it is usually argued that the basic wage for weavers, in particular, is of little relevance as it is augmented by bonuses, overtime and night shift allowance, it is not difficult to conclude that real wages in the blanket section were in a state of decline. The relative importance of added earnings from bonuses in fact may operate against an actual increase in earnings as the workers claim that the bonus systems are adjusted downwards with every increase in basic wages so as to reduce the final earnings. In this way whatever the increase negotiated by the Union, the management could then adjust the production bonus rates accordingly to keep final earnings static.Worker/management relations were at a low ebb before the February strikes. There are three elements which have to be considered:

(i) inter-worker relationships within each plant;
(ii) management-worker relations; and
(iii) union-management relations and the industrial relations system.

(i) Inter-Worker Relations

Although it is clear that all workers have distinct differences with management, which can be most fruitfully analysed in class terms, it is also true that racial differences generate tension and that racial attitudes cause division within the working class.

Apparently, after the 1949 race riots in Durban in which tension between the Indian and African community exploded, the Frame

Group decided to employ more African workers. This, at least, is the way the Indian workers see it. The Frame Group provided large-scale employment at low wages and african workers were seen to replace Indian workers at a rapid rate. The high turnover in the textile industry generally, and in the Frame Group, in particular, led to African workers, and especially African women, taking a leading role in production. From the labouring jobs, African workers soon took over virtually all spinning jobs, and then the large proportion of weaving jobs. Indian workers, in this situation, were likely to see African workers under-cutting their standards and would try to use the union to enforce conditions which would limit the degree of African participation in the textile industry. Indian workers were, however, so divided among themselves into different factions and workers spent so much of their time fighting among themselves, and even engaging in court action against union leaders, that the Union was unable to fulfil its potential for maintaining "labour standards". Obviously, this situation, which lasted until shortly before the last negotiation for a new agreement in 1972, prevented any effective worker action. At this time the total membership of the Natal branch of the Textile Workers Industrial Union was 300, and a minority of Indian workers in each plant belonged to the Union. A concerted drive shortly before the agreement came into operation brought about 100 more members.

One further type of inter-worker tension is that existing between male and female workers of whatever race. An award made by the Industrial Tribunal before the agreement which expired in 1972 laid down a 20 per cent lower wage for women workers. The difference in wages between men and women could be a source of dissension among workers.Although an African union existed in the textile industry as recently as 1970, and African shop stewards were recognised by the management, African workers were even more disillusioned with the un1on and unions generally than were the Indian workers. African workers perceived any unfavourable changes in their working conditions, and the lack of upward movement in wages, as being the union's fault.

(ii) Management/Worker Relations

According to union officials, workers in the Frame Group have always disliked and even hated their managers. Workers had very little respect for any managers, despite the usual situation among any labour force where workers are highly perceptive in their appraisal of the individual qualities of particular managers. The hostility which existed between workers and management did not necessarily lead to a consistently militant policy on the part of leading workers and the union, but rather towards a pathetic grievance complex with workers reciting endlessly how this was the worst management they had ever come across. The hopelessness and helplessness of the workers, so evident to an outsider, was really an indication of bottled-up hatred. This "it can't be helped" attitude towards affairs inside the factory also led to indifference about the administration of the Union, a subject which came to head towards the end of 1972.

(iii) Union/Management Relations

Management had been openly contemptuous of the union following a lengthy period of mismanagement and maladministration and an·open loss of confidence by the members in the union's key personnel. Wages in the heavy section of the industry are laid down by an industrial council on which there is equal representation from union and management. A regional council for each Province exists. All matters relating to the problems of workers in Natal should be aired in the regional council. According to TWIU officials, this rarely happened in practice. They complain that meetings of the regional council were few and far between, and conciliation in the spirit of the Industrial Conciliation Act was very difficult with a Secretary of the industrial council taking the view that disputes could only exist over matters prescribed in the agreement. Inspections of the textile factories in Natal were rare, the industrial agent (a retired divisional inspector of the Department of Labour) only making inspections on request and deciding unilaterally whether complaints were justified. No routine inspections were being made.

The basic elements of a good relationship between union and management did not exist. Meetings with shop stewards and the mass of members were held outside the factories. Although management was bound by the agreement to permit stop orders (checkoff) for members' subscriptions, in fact, members only paid a low rate of contributions because the firm claimed that not all workers had signed for the higher rates. To sum up: the union had been seen by workers and management as peripheral to the real determination of wages and working conditions in the plants. Union leadership was seen as discredited by management. In matters of real conflict, the union had been totally ignored by management in attempting to settle disputes.

Negotiations

In July 1972 the Textile Union negotiated with the National Association of Textile Manufacturers for a new agreement. These negotiations were seen by the workers as a way of restoring their lost earning power, and the demands which were made by the union, even in its weak state, reflected the aspirations of the textile workers who had participated in the formation of demands to a greater extent than in previous negotiations.

The Union made the Following Demands:

1. 60 per cent increase over three years;
2. An increase in bonus rates;
3. Three weeks paid holiday;
4. All public holidays to be paid holidays
5. An increase in overtime rates from time and a third to time and a half
6. A 42-hour week;
7. A holiday bonus;
8. The removal of wage discrimination against women

The employers offered, in response, a 20 per cent wage increase for labourers, 15 per cent for qualified spinners, and 10 per cent for qualified weavers to be spread over three years. Employers also proposed that women should be paid 25 per cent less than men instead of the prevailing 20 per cent. Negotiations between the trade union delegates to the Industrial Council and the Textile Manufacturers Association broke down and the dispute was referred to the Minister of Labour to appoint an arbitrator. After negotiations had failed, a report back meeting was held in the Clairwood Tamil Institute Hall on 22nd March 1972. Mr. Norman Daniels, head of the union negotiating team, told the workers, “If we had even thought of accepting these pitiful proposals, I am sure you would have lynched us. You would have said we had sold you down the river and you would have been right”. He promised that the union would present a watertight case during arbitration.

Following the breakdown of negotiations, all parties in the Industrial Council were confused about whether the Minister of Labour should have been approached to appoint an arbitrator. It was feared that an agreement dictated by the tribunal would have the same status as a Wage Board determination and so would displace the Industrial Council. Eventually, the matter was considered by the Industrial Tribunal on the 21st of June 1972. The employers made it quite clear that, in their view, if the Industrial Tribunal made a ruling in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act, the Industrial Council would then have no reason for continued existence. This threat was a primary reason for the union calling off the arbitration.

The wage increases originally offered by the employers were eventually accepted by the union and written into the new agreement, although the workers were bitterly disappointed that the arbitration was not pursued. The cautious optimism that prevailed before the arbitration, (“once they see how bad things are they will have to give us a good increase”) disintegrated. The atmosphere of bitterness and disillusion laid the basis for the conflict in February 1973.

There are about 41 textile units in Natal, 11 in the controlled section of the industry, and 30 in the cotton section. All these factories experienced strikes or some form of labour dissatisfaction, and all felt the shockwaves of the spread of the strike movement more severely than did higher-wage industries. According to official statistics, there were 20 strikes in the textile industry in Natal, but if we include ropes and mattings, bag and twine, and knitting in the definition of the textile industry, then there were 26 strikes. The textile industry was followed in a number of strikes by the metal industry which experienced 22 strikes.

Some of the textile strikes were amongst the longest in duration. There was one strike of seven days, five strikes lasted six days, one lasted five days, three lasted four days, two lasted three days, and six lasted one day. Although by international standards these were of relatively short duration, by South African standards the strikes were protracted. The cotton workers came out on strike on Thursday, 25 January 1973, starting in the massive Frametex plant. Then followed the other cotton mills adjacent to Frametex in quick succession: Seltex, Nortex, Pinetex and Natal Knitting Mills on the following day, Friday. On Friday morning at Consolidated Woolwashing and Processing Mills (C.W.P.M.) in Pinetown, where the large bulk of the workers are women rag sorters, an organiser and Mrs. Bolton, secretary of the Natal Branch of the Textile Workers' Industrial Union, addressed the workers on the necessity of making their demands known through the union, and, if possible, then negotiating through the union. By this time it was hoped the atmosphere of labour unrest might have awakened management to the necessity for change, and union recognition might have been secured at the same time. The plant manager refused to discuss the issues when approached and said he was too busy. A letter was then written to the firm and the Industrial Council outlining some of the workers' grievances. In the letter the following demands of the workers were conveyed to the management:

(a) An immediate increase of R1,00 per week;
(b) The introduction of an adequate long service bonus;
(c) A drastic reduction in the qualifying period for rag sorters;

(d) An end to clocking out to see the doctor;
(e) That the doctor comes at a definite time each day;
(f) That the practice of women workers having to see the manager before being able to see the doctor be stopped;

(g) That the workers be not forced to report to the factory when sick;
(h) That the practice of workers being punished by being laid off without being fired be stopped;
(i) That notice pay be paid for workers who are dismissed
(j) That the workers be provided with adequate notice of overtime;
(k) That the clock cards of workers should not be taken from the factory and kept at the residence of the manager;
(l) That the company ensure that proper transport be provided for workers;
(m) That the workers' consent for being searched be required;
(n) That the workers be allowed to leave the factory immediately after clocking out;
(o) That the practice of keeping workers standing outside the factory if they are slightly late be stopped. On Friday evening two senior officials of the T.W.I.U. left for a labour conference in Cape Town leaving the affairs of the union in the hands of a recently appointed organiser. On Monday, the 29th of January 1973, there was not one Frame factory in operation in Natal. Consolidated Woolwashing and Processing Mills, came out on strike as expected. The Union organiser tried to negotiate with management, but this was refused and the workers remained outside. The secretary of the Industrial Council had received the letter from the union but decided that since the agreement had not been violated by the management no "dispute" existed and, therefore, the Industrial Council would have nothing to do with the issue. At the cotton mills in Pinetown, the strikes continued although in this case increases of between R1,75 to R2,50 a week were offered to the workers. By now there were about 8000 textile workers on strike.

On Wednesday, 31 January, the officials of the T.W.I.U. were at the factories. At C.W.P.M. the workers were milling around outside. The Indian and African women were grouped together on one side of the

gate and the African and Indian men grouped separately on the other. The T.W.I.U. officials spoke to their members about the possibility of workers returning to work and about the degree of unity behind the demands. Shortly before the usual opening time (6.45 a.m.), the gate of the factory was opened and the workers were addressed by a new manager who offered wage increases. He told the workers that the company would employ those workers who accepted the offer and the others would be fired. The women workers made for the gate and the men followed. At C.W.P.M. the strike was over. During this scene, the union officials were completely ignored.

On Tuesday, 30 January, the Consolidated Textile Mill plant (C.T.M.) in Jacobs, the headquarters of the Frame Group had come out on strike. The workers demanded up to R30,00 a week. In this case, the union was caught by surprise and the new organiser had to make rapid contact with the T.W.I.U. shop stewards to find out the feelings of the workers. By this time, he realised that an emergency situation existed in the textile industry and telephoned the officials of the Natal Branch to return from Cape Town.

At C.T.M. the strikers were in an angry mood. On Tuesday, the 30th of January, the police had been called and had staged a show of strength. Despite all attempts to reach the Frame management communications between the union officials and management were negligible. Since the secretary of the Industrial Council had refused to accept that a dispute existed the machinery for arbitration could not be used.

The main complaint of the workers was the low level of wages in the Frame Group in comparison with the wages paid by firms in the surrounding area. The workers stressed, in particular, the rapid rise in the cost of living, and gave specific examples, particularly of increased transport costs. Apart from their grievances in connection with lower wages, the weavers complained that they were being exploited by the piece rate system in the plant, which was changed arbitrarily by the management. They felt that they had not really had an increase for decades, as the increase in basic wages was always offset by

adjustments in the piece rate system. Another grievance was that they were required to arrive much earlier than the starting time so that they could oil the looms and get the yarn for the day's production. If a worker was slightly late, they maintained, his loom was allocated to another worker and he was told to go home, even if there was some legitimate reason for his being late. It was also said that the yarn supplied for the production of blankets was inferior and that with frequent stoppages it was impossible to make sufficient blankets to benefit from piece rates. A more general discontent was connected with the sick benefit society. Membership of this society is a condition of service and each week, irrespective of earnings during that week, deductions were made from the wages of the workers. When the workers wish to see the Doctor, they have to clock out and lose time-wages, and then stand in long queues for medical attention. Numerous complaints about this system by the Union had not changed the system, the workers said. It was alleged that by setting up the sick benefit society the company avoided paying the full two weeks sick pay required in terms of Section 21A of the Factories Act. The Union continued to press for some response from management, but without success. Mr. Frame was in Rhodesia and the managers in charge refused to make any decision in his absence. On Thursday the 1st of February, however, the company made a press statement offering increased wages on condition the workers returned to work. Increases of R1,00 to R2,50 were offered to the workers, differing according to length of service and grade of work. The spinners and labourers were offered the higher increases. The workers rejected these wage proposals. A meeting of all textile workers was held at Bolton Hall, the new headquarters of the T.W.I.U. on that Thursday and the wage proposals were rejected decisively. It was resolved to continue the strike.

Management then agreed to bring forward a scheduled Industrial Council meeting for Wednesday the 7th of February, and the T.W.I.U. hoped that at this meeting management would increase their wage offer and agree to a revision of the agreement, which was already irrelevant in Natal in the light of wage increases offered by the employers. The Industrial Council meeting had however been called to consider the

exemptions requested by the Frame Group for their mills in Harrismith and East London to pay wages considerably lower than the recently negotiated national increase because these were situated in "border areas". The discussion about this and other matters dragged on while the officials were aware that a meeting of workers scheduled for 12.00 would be awaiting their return. When eventually the "current situation" was reached in the meeting management was obdurate. No further offers could be made above those already made, management said. At a mass meeting at Bolton Hall, the union explained the position. The workers were not impressed: they attacked the agreement which had held them down to low wages and made their rejection of the wage offer explicit. "The cost of living has gone so high I cannot afford to buy the blankets I make", said one worker. We are not children; we are not on strike. We are asking for the managers to listen to our problems, then we will go back to work," said another worker. Finally, however, the workers had to face the fact that they were experiencing problems in maintaining unity. On this, the seventh day of the strike, some workers were beginning to express their fear of losing their jobs. By this time also, some of the thrust of mass action in Durban had been blunted by other workers returning to work.

After a long discussion, the general secretary of the T.W.I.U. was asked to ring the Frame Group management to see whether there had been any change in their offer. After telling the management how obdurate the workers were in demanding increases above the offer of the managers, a further slight concession was made: that one day strike pay would be paid by the Frame Group if the workers returned to work on the following day, and that no workers would be fired. With these two points, he returned to the meeting and advised the workers to return to work. A rather dispirited, but not defeated, group of textile workers eventually accepted that they would have to go back to work because it would be difficult to maintain unity much longer.

On Monday the 5th of February, T.W.I.U. officials who were engaged in routine recruiting and collecting of subscriptions of workers at Smith and Nephew, a firm with a more progressive labour policy, were met

by a crowd of workers outside the gate. The workers explained they wanted a basic wage rate of R18,00 for all workers. While the union officials were working out the wage demands of the workers, the manager of the factory arrived on the scene and told the workers not to listen to "agitators who were telling you to go on strike". After a heated exchange, he then agreed to discuss the wage demands with the union. He had been working through tile weekend on a new scale of wages and asked the union officials to explain that this was as fat as the firm could go. This was not agreed to by the union officials but they did agree to negotiate for a quick settlement if the workers' demands could be met. The management's offer was substantially lower than R18,00 a week, although an improvement on existing wages.

An interpreter was called and the wages for each grade of workers were explained. This was not altogether successful as none of the workers knew what grade their job was. There was some disturbance as workers asked for the wage offered for their particular job. As the manager read off the wages grade by grade a worker shouted from the back of the crowd: "We are not potatoes". After the proposed wages had been explained and re-explained, it became quite evident that the proposals were totally unacceptable to the workers. Management left the meeting to get the wage proposals typed out for each worker. The organiser then discussed the problem of negotiation with the workers. He said he could understand any doubts they would have about his negotiating on their behalf. This was the first time that he was in the position of being able to negotiate with this firm and he felt that if it were possible to negotiate for the workers' demands then some progress would have been made. Whatever the management offered it would still be up to the workers as a whole to accept or reject the proposals. The workers then endorsed the suggestion that the organiser negotiate on their behalf, provided he put forward the demand for a basic wage of R18,00.

The organiser then approached the managers, who were standing around the gate discussing the situation among themselves. A meeting between the production managers, the managing director, and the

personnel office was called in the security room adjacent to the gate. The organiser put the case of the workers to the management and gave reasons, such as the rapidly rising cost of living, and the poverty datum line, for accepting the workers' demand outright. He was invited to remain in the discussion "to prod our consciences", but after a lengthy argument among the managers, it became clear that they were not willing to accede to the workers' demands. The organiser returned to convey their position to the workers. One of the production managers also came out and called his men together to discuss the offer with them. The workers remained adamant that they wanted the basic R18,00 even if it meant that all workers irrespective of skill or sex be paid that amount.

The organiser returned to tell the management that the workers would refuse to return on their offer. He then put it to management that the lower-paid workers should have their bonuses amalgamated with the basic wage since these were the workers hit hardest by the rapid rise in the cost of living. For other workers, with a potential earning higher than R18,00 the basic wage rate could remain the same, but the worker would be guaranteed a minimum take-home pay over and above deductions for tax and other reasons of R18,00. Management immediately responded to this method of introducing rapid increases in basic wages and estimated the likely increase in the total wage bill for the rest of the year. In the event, the total wage bill would not be increased dramatically. Nothing more was done on Monday as the organiser insisted that every worker be presented with written wage offers and these had to be typed.

On the following day, the union officials discussed the amended proposals of the management with the workers, who were quite receptive. At this meeting, however, plain clothes police were present in force. During that day four cars followed the union cars from factory to factory. Police stood immediately behind union officials and made notes of what was being said. Their presence was particularly obstructive when the union officials tried to gauge the feelings of the women workers, both African and Indian for while the male workers

were offered RlB,00, the women were offered a minimum of R12,00. The workers, however, accepted these proposals and went back to work.

It was only in the textile industry that a union took any active part in negotiating on behalf of workers, either successfully or unsuccessfully. The situation was rather different in the furniture industry, where routine negotiations were already taking place and the workers' demands were channelled to the negotiating table. In the metal industry, none of the unions appeared at the factories during the strikes. So, from the position of the Textile Workers Industrial Union, the strikes strengthened the hand of union officials immensely. At one plant, Smith and Nephew, the union was instrumental in getting the workers' demand accepted although the women's wage still lagged proportionately behind that of the men. At this plant, union recognition, previously denied, was soon accorded. At the same time, the union officials came under close scrutiny and were very exposed to the security police who were obviously attempting to find the "agitators". Some union officials were clearly affected by this pressure.

Most African workers in the textile industry cannot be immediately replaced if they go on strike, since they require both training and experience if they are to produce at the required rate. The following table shows the distribution of the weekly-paid workforce, nearly 90% of whom are African, in terms of job categories at one of the largest textile mills in Durban.

Grade 1	e.g. labourer, carrier tea attendant.	11%
Grade 2 operators	e.g. machine operators or assistant machine on certain machines	30%
Grade 3 machines,	e.g. weaver, operator of the more complicated machines, factory clerks, needle setters.	45%
Grade 4 instructor	e.g. storeman, printing machine operator, driver, laboratory assistant.	10%

Thus only 11% of the workers are in the unskilled category. It is estimated that workers in Grades 11 and 111 require up to a month's training and several months' experience before they can reach bonus levels of production. This fact immeasurably improves their bargaining position and was an important factor contributing to the relative success of the strike.

In terms of previous wage increases, the wage increases offered by the Frame Group were unprecedented. From 1966 to 1972 wages had only increased by 90 cents for weavers in the controlled section of the industry. In July 1972 wages for weavers had increased by R1,29 through negotiation, and then for the weavers with more than five years' service by a further R2,50 in February 1973. The increases were fruits of the only "offensive" strike undertaken by textile workers in Durban. (The strike in 1956 was in defence of existing wage rates.) The wage increases began to turn the tide against rising prices, and declining real wages in the textile industry.

These achievements, although significant, were patchy, Real reform of the wage structure of the textile industry Gan only begin with the amendment of the existing wage agreement, of which the wage clause has been rendered obsolete, and by a resolution on the part of the cotton manufacturers, in particular, to deal with the union. On the one hand, the strike had greatly strengthened the union, brought about

unprecedented wage increases, and an improvement in the relations between Indian and African workers. On the other, the cotton industry still remained uncontrolled, and many of the pressing grievances of the workers, and of the weavers in particular, were ignored.

D. The Parttens of the Strikes

In most industrial countries strikes are relatively routine affairs. Workers and management know their roles, and the development of the strike follows a predictable pattern. This is not the case in South Africa, and, as a result, interesting patterns of organisation and negotiation emerge. Here we shall describe what seems to have been the typical course of a strike. Obviously, in some firms, the pattern was not followed at all, and other firms may have gone through only some of these steps.

The beginnings of most of the strikes are shrouded in mystery. What is clear is that there was no organised body such as a trade union which called for a strike to occur at a particular time over particular demands. Sometimes workers seem to have had informal meetings outside the gates before work, at which the decision to strike was immediately taken.

In other instances, workers simply stopped work in one part of the factory, and the strike spread. In either case, the result was a mass meeting of workers, either in or just outside the factory. Demands do not seem to have been clearly formulated. In some instances, the mass meetings called on employers to speak to them. In other cases, they seem to have left the initiative to the employer. Demands usually emerged in these confrontations with management, with the workers taking up whichever initial cry appeared to them to be the most attractive. Employers were barracked, jeered at, and disbelieved, but never threatened with violence. However, by this stage employers had usually called in the police, who were often in attendance at these meetings.

The following press reports, dealing with negotiations with Durban Corporation workers, captures the spirit of such meetings: "The shouting masses who were demanding that their weekly wages be increased by at least R10,00 fell silent when a large contingent of police converged on the area in vans and four-wheel drive vehicles. The police, armed with batons and tear gas stood by as two army helicopters circled the area. The City Engineer, Mr. Cecil Hands, addressed the strikers and warned them that their refusal to go back to work on essential service was not legal. 'The police have told me that they could take action because what you are doing is illegal… but they have not done so, 'Mr. Hands said. At this stage, the crowd jeered at Mr. Hands and shouted at him to get off the platform. He explained the Council's decision to increase wages by 15% but the workers interrupted him, shouting that they wanted R10,00 per week more. He appealed to the crowd to put their demands to the Council through the Central Committee for Bantu Liaison, but the strikers replied that they did not want to deal with the Committee. He said that the Council could not take another decision quickly and, in any case, did not know what decision to take, (DN 6.2.73).

The mood at these meetings seems frequently to have been euphoric, with humour outweighing anger in the interjections. The workers felt released from a great psychological burden. There were many press photographs of workers brandishing sticks, but they were dancing with the sticks, not threatening with them. There was also much singing of songs like "Nkosi Sikelele iAfrika", the traditional African anthem. The initial demands usually embodied this euphoric excitement, since they were demands for wages much higher than the workers could realistically hope to obtain. Sometimes they demanded up to three times their current wages, although the figure of R20,00, which probably represented in most cases an increase of between 50% and 100%, seems to have been the most frequent.

Managers always said that they could not and would not negotiate with a "mob" in so far as they were willing to negotiate at all, and called for the workers either to elect a committee or to negotiate through some

existing committee. In some cases, the workers did elect negotiating committees, but it would seem that the more usual response was refusal. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the workers did not trust management sufficiently. They considered it likely that elected committee members would be construed as agitators, and marked for later victimisation. Secondly, a work stoppage only becomes a strike when it is in aid of specific demands. Thus, workers who simply stop work and wait for employers to do something about it are not technically striking. In fact, many workers insisted, in newspaper interviews and at mass meetings, that they were not striking: they had just stopped work because they wanted more money. Apparently, they felt that the protective ambiguity of this situation could be better maintained if they refused to organise themselves around a committee presenting specific demands. After the initial meeting, workers seem to have remained in the vicinity of the factory most of the time, although there was no formal picketing, which in any case would probably not have been permitted by the police.

In shorter strikes, workers usually returned en masse to the factory each day, sometimes to be addressed again by management, and sometimes merely to meet outside the factory. The fact that the strikers remained on-site was important for the spread of the strikes, since workers in neighbouring factories could easily see what was going on, and were probably also encouraged to join in by friends already on strike. From our information, we do not know what kind of organisation emerged amongst workers as the strike continued, nor do we know how the final decision to return to work was taken. Consensus seems to have emerged from continuous discussion.

Employers' responses were varied by the various employers' organisations that were very active in attempting to coordinate employers' actions. The following advice was issued to its members during the strikes by the Durban Chamber of Commerce. "If you have a labour stoppage the Chamber suggests that you take the following action:

1. Notify the Department of Labour (Telephone number 28371).
2. Advise your workers that you will consider their demands on the

condition that they return to work.
3. Advise the workers that there will be no pay for the time they are on strike.

4. If you consider that your present rates of pay are fully justifiable, stand by these and in no circumstances move from that stand.

5. If you feel that an increase in minimum wage is necessary determine this increase and tell them of your decision. Thereafter stand by your decision.
6. Do not attempt to bargain as this will only encourage the Bantu to escalate his demands. Action must be positive, definite and final.

7. Grant increases of a definite amount in preference to percentages on earnings. Percentages are not easily understood by the Bantu and across-the-board increases are a greater benefit to the lowest-paid workers.

8. Do everything possible to avoid violence but if this should arise, call the police immediately.

9. Stoppages to date have been mainly good-natured and the tactful police action has contributed greatly to this, "Make every effort to keep it this way."

The first move was usually to demand that the workers return to work before any discussion could occur. Sometimes workers did return as soon as discussions were promised, but most workers were aware that this apparently reasonable suggestion was designed to take the initiative from the workers. In the normal industrial situation, management holds all the cards. A strike suddenly introduces a more equal balance of forces, but if the workers return before negotiating, this is lost. If negotiations break down the workers have once more to go through the difficult process of beginning a strike, and this time when the employers can prepare for it. Thus, in most cases, the workers did not return immediately.

In some firm's management at this point refused to make any offers, and held out until the workers returned. In most firms, they made a small offer, of

between R1,00 – R2,00 per week. This was usually rejected initially, and was sometimes followed in the next day or two by a slightly larger offer. Finally, if this too was rejected, many employers used the technique of "negotiation by sacking". They informed the workers that they were all dismissed, but could apply for reinstatement at the new rates, or else they gave them a deadline after which all workers who had not returned to work would be dismissed. In most cases, this seems to have been a negotiating ploy, and most of the workers who were dismissed in this way were eventually taken back.

The frequency with which employers made offers, and the speed with which workers reacted obviously varied from plant to plant. Some workers returned immediately without any increase or with only a small increase, while some remained out for some time even after they had received a more substantial offer. But nearly all returned to work relatively quickly for much less than they had been demanding. The return usually occurred the morning after an employer's offer. The decision was probably the result of large numbers of small group discussions, taken in the light of the amount gained and the likelihood of further gains, and of the difficulty of staying out longer. We have already described the mass meeting of textile workers which led to the return to work at C.T.M. Here the workers discussed all these problems with notable realism. It was clear that they had not really expected to get the R20,00 per week that they had been calling for.

In his study of strikes, Hyman distinguishes between "trials of strength" (or confrontations), and "demonstration stoppages". The latter are short, and usually spontaneous in origin: "The decision to stop work is often virtually spontaneous - though the dispute will probably still centre around, or at least reflect, long-standing grievances which peaceful application has failed to remedy" (Hyman, Strikes, page 2.). Since demonstration strikes are intended to draw attention to a grievance, they usually end when that has been achieved, even if the grievances have not been fully remedied. It is clear that most of the strikes that we have been considering were demonstration strikes. They did not develop into a major trial of strength between the two sides. The main reason for this is probably the poverty of the workers, who simply did not have

the financial reserves to stay out of work for long. One employer told his workers when they struck on Friday, "You can only strike for one or two days. If you could strike for a month, you would be alright." He was right. When they came to the factory to strike on Monday morning, he told them that he was not going to increase their wages and that if they were not back at work on Tuesday they would be fired. They duly returned to work.

E. Police, Press and Unions

These three groups from outside the actual factory played roles in the strikes which were significant either by omission, in the case of the unions, or by commission, in the case of the other two. There was much comment in the press on the part played by the police. The consensus of both editorials and quoted opinion leaders were warmly congratulatory. But a full evaluation of the role of the police is complicated by the very peculiar structure of society. The strikers were clearly in many cases breaking the law in striking, holding public meetings without permits, creating disturbances by marching in large numbers down public roads, and carrying sticks which could have been construed as "dangerous weapons" (see statement by Brigadier Bisschoff on 7 February). Technically, therefore, the police could have arrested them and large-scale arrests would almost certainly have created a very dangerous situation. Apparently acting on higher authority, the police acted with restraint in the situation, and there were reports of individual policemen showing sympathy for the plight of the low-paid workers. On the other hand, from the worker's perspective, the presence of large numbers of armed police, often with dogs, could only be seen as a form of intimidation. It must have been clear to the workers that the police were, in the last resort, on the side of the employers. The police were placed in a very difficult situation as a result of the inadequacies of the industrial relations system. They simply should not have had to be there. The Natal press reported the strikes extensively from the beginning. Indeed, some employers blamed the press for the spread of the strikes, and there were rumours that some people attempted to put pressure on the newspapers to play them down. The tone of reporting was, on

the whole, sympathetic to the strikers. There were many interviews with workers, giving details of their incomes and problems, and this was probably an important factor in strengthening White sympathy for the strikers. But it must also be pointed out that, inevitably, the press sympathy was strongly tinged with paternalism, and fell far short of outright support. Of course, it would have been illegal for them to do this, but nevertheless, the sympathy with which they reported the activities of White scabs indicates that they would, in any event, not have given the strike full backing. The general attitude was that the workers had real grievances, but that these had now been brought to the notice of the public and the employers, so the workers should now return to work. A similar attitude was shown in the stress on the importance of improved communications as a means to industrial peace. But this approach ignores the power dimension involved in industrial conflict. It seems fair to say that the press backed the strikers in so far as they were expressing grievances, but not in so far as they were attempting to exercise power. The strikes demonstrated clearly the growing weakness of the registered trade unions in South Africa. Although in many cases their members were out on strike most of the unions seem to have felt that the initiative was so firmly in the hands of non-unionised African workers that there was no point in their trying to intervene. Some of the unions, such as Garment, Furniture, Textile and Tin Unions, did try to intervene, but often found themselves rejected by management on the grounds that they did not represent the workers. Other unions seem to have done nothing at all, and our impression from the union officials that we interviewed was that they had very little contact with the African workers in their industry. They all said that they would be in favour of African membership of their unions, but in the meanwhile, they did not seem to be doing anything about it. However, in many cases, union members benefited from the strikes, as wages tended to be raised across the board. This may mean that registered union sympathy for African workers has increased. Another outside body which should be mentioned is the Department of Labour. Although officials from the department were often called to the scene of a strike, they do not seem to have played any important part in settling disputes.

F. Results

In some firms, the workers went back without any concrete gains but in most cases, they won wage increases, usually of between R1,50 to R2,50 per week. In many firms where there were no strikes, wages were also increased to avoid possible trouble. These increases usually applied across the board to all African, Indian and Coloured workers, whether they had struck or not. It is clear, from the few cases in which details are available, that the workers had a wide range of grievances apart from low wages, but it is much more difficult to know whether these have also been remedied. Some of these grievances relate to easily removable points of friction, but many others are intimately related to the problem of controlling the workforce, and probably remain unsolved. For the workers the other main achievement of the strike is less tangible but perhaps even more important: it is a sense of solidarity and potential power.

CHAPTER 2

The Participants

During and after the strikes we undertook surveys of the attitudes of different groups towards the strikes. We interviewed African workers, Indian workers, members of the White public, and a number of employers who were affected by the strikes. Each of these sets of interviews has its own limitations, which we specify in introducing the results, but the four surveys, taken together, do help to fill out the history of the strikes.

The African Workers

As the main actors in the strikes, they are the most important group to understand. We were unable to undertake a full sample survey of the African workforce. Inter alia we thought that, given the illegality of the strikes, workers would probably be very suspicious of interviewers

who approached them in their homes or at their places of work to ask them questions about the strikes. We, therefore, decided to conduct our interviews in a place where the respondents would have confidence in the interviewers, and where a large number of African workers were to be found. The Workers' Benefit Fund has premises in the James Bolton Hall, which is the headquarters of a number of trade unions with essentially Indian and-Coloured membership. The Benefit Fund itself caters for Africans. In addition to providing benefits for its members, it also acts as an advice bureau and complaints service. We arranged for questionnaires to be given to some of these workers. One of the interviewers also interviewed people travelling on the bus to and from work. In this way, we managed to conduct a total of 95 interviews. None of those asked at the Benefit Society refused to answer, but a few on the buses did refuse. The three interviewers were all Zulu.

There are obviously some major disadvantages in such a procedure. The sample is not selected from the working class as a whole, but rather from a self-selected section of it. Workers who actually take steps to rectify their grievances are, in South Africa's industrial climate, likely to be atypical. Out interviewers were not completely anonymous individuals. They were specifically associated with a workers' organisation. It is, therefore, possible that respondents might unconsciously tend to bias their answers in a particular way. We do not, however, believe that this is likely to have taken place to any significant extent. First, although the Benefit Society is a workers' organisation, it is not a trade union: it had no policy on the strikes and had taken no part in them. Thus, the respondents would not necessarily have any preconceived ideas about how to answer the questionnaire. Secondly, it is probable that without the atmosphere of trust created by knowing who the interviewers were, it would not have been possible to get honest responses. But although we are satisfied with the nature of the interview procedure, the nature of our sample obviously leaves much to be desired. For this reason, we do not claim that the results of this survey represent an adequate or representative cross-section of the opinions of workers of different ages and experiences from a variety

of different industries, who earned different wages. More significantly, on the key questions about the strikes, there is a degree of consensus which we believe entitles us to make at least some modest and tentative generalisations beyond those workers whom we actually interviewed as to the likely opinions of their colleagues.

Table 1: The African Sample

Age	**25**	**40**			**Age**
22%	**55%**	**23%**			
Years	**0 - 1**	**1 - 5**	**5 - 15**	**15 -**	**Length with present employer**
17%	**41%**	**29%**	**13%**		
Years	**0 - 5**	**5 - 10**	**10 -**		**Length of time in Durban**
16%	**18%**	**66%**			
Rand	**0 -12**	**12 - 18**	**18 - 25**	**25 -**	**Weekly Wage**
12%	**66%**	**14%**	**8%**		

The questionnaire contained eight questions about the strikes and four questions about the attempted train boycott on the 1st of February. Transport costs have often been a key issue in previous mass action by Blacks in South Africa, and transport boycotts, such as the Alexandra bus boycott have been among the most successful and long-drawn-out campaigns. We were, therefore, particularly interested to get the opinions of our respondents as to why they thought that at this particular period of mass strike action, the transport boycott had apparently failed, With one exception the questions on the strike were formulated in general terms, rather than with reference to the respondent or to his factory. Thus, even those who had not themselves gone on strike could answer them. Although we did not in fact, ask the respondents if they had joined in the strikes, we did ask for the name of their workplace, and, using our (probably incomplete) list of strikes, established that just under half of those who gave the name of their

firm had been affected by the strikes. It seemed to us reasonable to ask the same questions of those who did not strike since the strikes had obviously been a major talking point amongst African workers, and each of our respondents could be expected to know workers who had struck and to have talked about the strikes with them. What we were trying to do with the interviews was not so much to get an accurate picture of what had happened in a particular strike, but rather to discover how the African workers perceived what had happened. Our first question was "What was the aim of the strike?" Unsurprisingly, 98% replied that the aim was to get higher wages. One respondent said that he didn't know, and one said "It was to let the Whites know the needs of the workers". Thus, it would seem that there is virtual unanimity on this issue. The second question asked was "Did the workers talk to the employers before the strikes?", and the answers to this question are considerably more interesting. Many employers, when interviewed by the press at the time of the strikes, said that the strikes had been completely unexpected and that they wished that their workers had spoken to them first. However, just under 80% of our sample say that workers did in fact try talking to their employers before the strikes, and at least half of them elaborate on their reply with some such comment as "But it was no use". Amongst those whom we could establish had actually been in a strike, the percentage rises to nearly 90%. It seems clear from this that, whatever the employers say, the workers felt that they had made some attempt to convey their problems, but that these attempts were ignored. To put it another way, the workers felt that their employers had no justification for claiming that they did not know about the workers' problems.

It is important to try to explain this flagrant contradiction between the perceptions of the two sides in the dispute. To some extent, it can be accounted for as a rationalisation after the event, by both parties. But there may well be an additional factor involved. For communication to occur it is necessary for each party not only to hear but also to pay attention to the other party. It may well be that the workers spoke in such a way as to be paid attention to. Over the years the employers may have grown accustomed to a low rumble of discontent from their

employees over wages. Prior to the strikes they would have detected nothing new in the rumble which might have presaged the explosion, and in this sense are perfectly correct to insist that they received no advance warning. It was not that nobody told them that there was a rumble of dis- content. It was that nobody told them that they could no longer afford to ignore it.

Our next question was an attempt to probe the extent to which the workers saw the strike as having been either organised or produced by intimidation. We asked, "What gave the workers the idea that a strike would help them?". We expected that if there had been any organisation involved, then at least some of the workers would have made some reference to this in explaining the origin of the idea of striking. In fact, only one person indicated some intellectual origin of the idea, and he said, "We heard from newspapers that long ago strikes helped workers". Another said, "We were encouraged by rumours". Most of the respondents gave a "situational" response saying that all other methods had failed (17%), or that it was the only effective way (24%), or, reiterated the answer to the first question, saying that it was the result of poverty (26%). Others gave practical answers such as "It's because if the whole firm goes on strike, we can't all be fired at once", or "The employers would also have much to lose", as a slaughterer with twenty years service in his firm put it. A 29-year-old laboratory assistant, earning R27,00 per week, expanded on this theme: "We knew that the work we do is important to the employer and gives him a big profit. Thus, if we stopped that would hurt him very much". A R10,45 per week tea-maker summed it all up very concisely: "Because employers are employers because of workers". Nearly all the answers indicate that the "idea" of striking did not need to be supplied from outside. It may be therefore that what was required to get the strike going was a particular situation, and the situation could perhaps be best described as "We were poor and had explored unsuccessfully all other ways of alleviating our poverty".
To the question "Why did the workers go back to work?", seventy percent of our respondents replied that they had received or been promised an increase. That is, 70%, saw the workers as having gone back after

having achieved success, and this figure rises to just over 80% if we consider only those we could establish had actually struck. About 20% list negative reasons, such as lack of money, fear of the police, or fear for their jobs. A greaser of National Containers, one of the firms which had a long strike, said simply "The White man (Umlungu) ordered us back to work". Amongst these negative answers, fear of losing jobs preponderated, being given in about two-thirds of the cases, while fear of the police, arrest, or unspecified Government action, respectively, were each only referred to once. The main conclusion to be drawn from this is that most workers saw the strikes as being at least a qualified victory. And this is confirmed by the answers to the next question: “Did the strike help those who struck?”. Forty-three percent of those interviewed gave an unqualified “Yes” answer, another 37% gave a qualified yes, saying that it had helped some people; while only 15% said that it had not helped at all.

However, the answers to the next three questions indicate just how incomplete the workers see this success as being:

	Yes	Some	No	No answer/ Don’t know
Are the workers satisfied now?	**10%**	**10%**	**75%**	**5%**
Has there been any improvement at your workplace since the strikes?		**10%**	**--**	**75%** **15%**
Do you think workers will strike again if they are dissatisfied?		70%	--	20% 10%

Of those who say that there will be no more strikes, only one respondent said that this was because they are satisfied with their present position. Of the others who gave reasons, all said either that

the workers were scared, that it was illegal, or that the strikes did not help. We asked each respondent for his or her wage, age, length of service and length of residence in Durban, as one might expect attitudes towards the strike to correlate with some of these variables. However, none of these factors seem to make any great difference. This in itself is significant, especially in regard to wage levels. One might expect those workers earning over the Poverty Datum Line of R18 per week to express a greater degree of satisfaction, but in fact, this is not the case. This may indicate that there is not likely to be any quick and easy way of satisfying the demands of African workers.

The essential conclusion which can be drawn from these results are the following: The workers struck because of low wages and the feeling that the employer would not do anything to remedy the wage levels unless drastic action was taken. They feel that the strikes were productive, but they remain very dissatisfied. Having discovered that the strike is an effective weapon, the majority are fully prepared to use it again. It may well be, therefore, that the most significant change wrought by the strikes is not in the workers' living standards, but in their sense of their own potential power.

The Train Boycott

All the strikes involved "plant-based" action. They were not coordinated with one another, and the strikers returned to work as a result of what happened at their own particular place of work, rather than as a result of more general considerations. The train boycott, on the other hand, was an attempt at what might be called a "mass strike". the contrast between the mass strike and the plant strike is particularly significant because many of the strikes undertaken by Black workers in the 1950s were mass strikes, either on issues affecting whole communities, such as transport costs, or else on national issues. Some of these strikes, in particular, the transport boycotts, enjoyed a considerable amount of support. However, it is probable that none had the overall impact of the wave of plant strikes in Durban. It is, therefore, interesting to know:

a) why the planned/rumoured train boycott at the same time failed, and
b) whether there was any conscious recognition on the part of the strikers of the possible tactical superiority of the plant strike over the mass strike.

Unfortunately, the results of our survey are not very revealing. This is partly the result of bad drafting of the questionnaire. For instance, we asked people whether or not they had used the trains on the day of the boycott, but we neglected to ask whether they habitually used the trains, so our responses cannot be taken to reflect adequately the extent of the boycott. In addition, it would really have been necessary to ask more than the four questions to which we restricted ourselves. However, the results are not totally uninteresting. Press reports of the intended boycott, and of police precautions taken to prevent the boycott, seemed to imply that practically the sole problem was one of intimidation by those organising the boycott, and that police protection was necessary in order to protect the citizens, who had no intention of voluntarily boycotting the trains, from the thugs intent on forcing them to do so. We, therefore, asked the first question to assess the general attitude of commuters towards the train service. We asked, "Are the People house the trains satisfied with them now? If not, why not?". Twenty percent either did not answer or else said that they did not in fact travel by train. Fourteen percent replied that people were satisfied with the trains. Two-thirds expressed dissatisfaction. The major reason given, by 44% of the sample, was that fares were too high. 10% said that the trains were over-crowded, and most of the others simply said that they were dissatisfied, without giving any reason. Thus, not surprisingly, we found a relatively high level of dissatisfaction. Our next question was, "Did you use the trains on Thursday the 1st of February?". Forty-two percent of the sample said they had, and another 8% answered vaguely or not at all. Of the remaining 50%, half replied that they had not used the trains because they never did so. This leaves a quarter of the sample who may or may not have participated in the boycott. Almost certainly some of these were also people who did not normally use the trains. The answers

seem to indicate that though there may have been some boycotting it was very limited.

We then asked how people had learnt about the boycott. They were on the whole unspecific. Just over 50% mentioned rumour, or "Somebody told me about it" or "I heard it on the bus". Nearly a quarter said that they had read about it in the newspapers, or heard about it on the radio. One said he had been told by the police and another by his employer. About one-eighth said that they had not heard about it at all. This seems to indicate that the plan for a boycott was perhaps not as widespread as was implied at the time. About half of the sample had either not heard of it, or else had heard from "official" (or "White") sources which were concerned about stopping rather than starting it. It is probable also that at least some of the rumours which are referred to as the source of information had as their source somebody who had heard the news from one of these "official" sources.

The most interesting results are given by the answers to our fourth question: "Why did people not support the train boycott?". A wide variety of explanations was given. Only 10% said that it was simply because people were not in favour of a boycott. 20% said that it was either because the workers feared arrest or because they feared losing their jobs. It is noteworthy that while over 10% of the sample said that the boycott failed because the workers feared the police, not a single informant said it failed because the police protected the commuters from intimidators. That is, those who see the police as having had a role in the failure of the boycott see them as having constituted a threat, rather than a protection. 15% of the sample said that it was because workers were more concerned with striking for wages. 15% referred to lack of organisation, or lack of unity, and explained this lack of unity through differences in wage levels, or fear of losing out to bus users. Some of these answers also imply that some better-paid workers used the trains because they were not so seriously affected by the rise in fares. Finally, just over one-third either did not answer (10%) or said that they did not know (17%) or answered in very vague terms.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from the above, other than that:

a) If there was an organised attempt to boycott the trains it was not effectively organised;

b) Most train users are dissatisfied with the trains;
c) If there was an organised attempt it did not fail through widespread commuter opposition to the idea of a boycott;

d) Some workers perceive the police as· having played a role in ensuring the failures of the boycott, but not the protective role that the police themselves claim to have played.

A survey carried out by Schlemmer amongst African workers in Durban in 1971-72 provides some very useful supplementary information (See Douwes-Dekker, Hamson, Kane-Berman, Lever and Schelmmer, "Case Studies in African Labour Action in South and South-West Africa".), in regard to the strikes as a whole. The study covered a random sample of 350 African men, about 85% of whom were workers. Schlemmer investigated three problems relevant to our study:

1) Perceptions and understandings of poverty;
2) Tendencies, towards individualistic or collectivistic-responses to the problem of poverty;
3). Awareness of the latent bargaining power of the African workforce.

1). The reaction of individuals to their own poverty will depend, inter alia on how they explain the existence of that poverty. There are three different possible types of explanation. Individuals may explain their poverty as being the result of natural forces, such as bad soil and bad crops; however, such an explanation is not available in an industrial society. Secondly, they may interpret it as being a result of their own individual inadequacies. People who adopt such an explanation

are not likely to think of trying to improve their position by any concerted action. Finally, they may explain it in social terms, with reference to discrimination, lack of equality of opportunity, or some form of exploitation or oppression. It is people who adopt this kind of explanation who are most likely to engage in political or economic action. Schlemmer found that, of those who gave clear responses to this question, about two-thirds fell into this last category, as opposed to about one-third who believed that they were in some personal way responsible for their poverty. Thus, about two-thirds of the sample had the basic understanding of a system of oppression which is required for collective action.

2). About 70% of the sample were oriented towards some sort of community solidarity, but of these only about two-fifths, 27% of the total sample, interpreted the need for communal action in clearly 'political' terms, involving "an awareness of the need for a commitment to shared struggle, the setting of group goals, unity and solidarity, and mutual encouragement in the face of discrimination and fear". The others spoke in much vaguer and more sentimental terms, often in terms of "a strong religious frame of reference". About 28% of the sample replied in specifically individualistic terms. The most significant group here, then, are the 27% who do think 'politically', and so would be more likely to take the lead in a strike situation.

3). Nearly a half of the sample showed some degree of awareness of the potential strength of Black labour, but only about one-fifth of this group, or 10% of the sample "express this awareness in terms which are either related to labour action or broader political action". About forty percent of the sample, on the other hand, express a sense of powerlessness, while about 6% give "Uncle Tom" answers.

From the analysis of these three issues, we can see that, while about two-thirds of the samples themselves as being oppressed rather than simply unlucky or incompetent, and also see the necessity for some sort of communal response to the situation, only about a half think that there is some hope of such a response working, one quarter have some idea of the problems in strategic terms, and one-tenth are willing to formulate a strategy in terms of collective labour action.

The levels of collective consciousness are illustrated in the following table:

Community solidarity orientation	70% of sample
Awareness of potential collective strength	50% of sample
General sense of strategic problems	27% of sample
Clear concept of labour or political action	10% of sample

Schlemmer points out that these percentages probably err on the side of conservatism, but they do disclose the sort of pattern that one would expect. It is a pattern of wide-spread discontent, with a large nucleus of potential activists, whom one would expect to take the lead if any possibility of action emerged. The fact that a relatively large percentage of the sample had a sense of powerlessness is probably to be explained in situational terms. The perceptions of such individuals would be likely to change rapidly once the actual possibility of action arose. The survey supports both our own results and the common-sense intuition that, prior to the strikes, most African workers in Durban were discontented and available for strike action, and certainly did not need to be intimidated.

A. Indian Workers

The press and most commentators described the strikes as "Zulu Strikes" or "African Strikes", However, there are nearly as many Indian and Coloured workers in the Durban area, and some reports spoke of these workers as also striking. But it was also suggested that when they did not turn up to work it was largely out of fear. We considered it important, therefore, to investigate:

a) what role these workers played in the strikes, and
b) the extent to which they perceived themselves as a distinct group of workers with interests different from those of African workers. As the Coloured population of Durban is relatively small, we decided to limit our investigation to Indian workers.

Most commentators seem to have assumed, for two main reasons, that there would be a division of interest between Indian and African workers. First, it was assumed that Indian workers are on the whole employed in more skilled jobs, are better educated and better paid, as well as having trade union rights.

For this reason, one might expect them to have divergent economic interests and perhaps to stand in roughly the same relation to African workers as did White workers in an earlier period; that is a relation of competition for jobs. Second, there is thought to be a certain amount of inter-communal hostility between the two groups, and an Indian legacy of fear from the 1949 riots in which a number of Indians were killed by African rioters.

The policy of segregation, which requires Indians and Africans to live in separate residential areas and attend separate schools, might be expected to encourage Indians to think of themselves as a separate group.

The press did not pay much specific attention to this aspect of the strikes in their detailed reporting on particular strikes, However, there were a number of statements by employers that Indian workers had joined strikes through fear. On the other hand, we were informed by trade unionists that they had been approached informally by their Indian members who wanted to join the strikes, but were afraid of being victimised by their employers. They were advised to tell their employers that they were staying away through fear, and thus to get the best of both worlds. An organiser from the Furniture Workers' Union was told by the African strike leader in one factory he visited that, "The Indians want to join us but they are scared of the employers. They want us to chase them out of the factory so that they will have an excuse". Thus, given the very low level of trust that black workers have in their White employers, not much weight can be given to the employers' statements about workers' motives.

We spoke to the secretaries of the following unions: Durban Indian Municipal Employees, Engineering and Industrial Workers, Furniture Workers, Natal Baking Industry Employees, Motor Assemblies, Tin Workers, Tea and Coffee Workers, Sweet Workers, Garment Workers and Textile Workers. These Unions cover most of the firms involved in the strikes, representing only the Indian and Coloured Workers in these firms. None of them reported any incident in which African workers used violence against Indian workers. Most of them said that the relations between the two groups were good, and several reported instances in which Indian artisans had encouraged the African labourers to strike. In the furniture industry, artisans struck several firms in support of higher wages for labourers. One significant example of this was the Indian-owned firm Trueart, where there was a particularly good relationship between Indian and African workers against the Indian employer. One instance of potential conflict also comes from the furniture industry. At a union meeting, it was reported that Indian artisans at one factory were acting as strike-breakers by bringing in their relatives to do the work of striking Africans. The mass meeting reacted furiously to this information, and the practice ceased without any intervention by the Africans being necessary.

However, the fact that there seems to have been no conflict between Indian and African workers does not preclude the possibility that expectations of such conflict affected the way that Indian workers acted during the strikes. We, therefore, undertook a survey of Indian workers to get their opinions on the matter. We selected the predominantly working-class Indian suburb of Merewent, which is adjacent to the strike-hit industrial area of Jacobs-Mobeni. Using the municipal plot numbers in the areas of Council housing, we selected 20 points with the aid of a table of random numbers. Between five and seven interviews were conducted around each point, using Kish's table to select a respondent when there was more than one factory or corporation worker in a household. The interviews were conducted over the weekend of 24-25 February, on a Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

Our sample was made up as illustrated in Table 2. The most noteworthy point is that 80% had standard 6 or less education, and nearly one-half were earning under the Poverty Datum Line figure of R18 per week. Thus, many Indian workers are neither better educated nor better paid than their African fellow workers. Merewent is typical of Indian working-class areas in Durban, and most Durban Indians are working class.

Table 2: The Indian Sample

Sex	**Woman**	**Men**			
	26.5,	**73.5,**			
Age	**0 - 25,**	**25 - 40,**	**40 +,**		
	26,	**42,**	**32,**		
Education (Standard)	**0 - 5,**	**5 - 6,**	**6 - 8,**	**8 - 10,**	
	46,	**24,**	**14,**	**6,**	
Length of service (Years)	**0 - 1,**	**1 - 5,**	**5 - 15,**	**15 +,**	
	15,		**39,**	**23,**	**23,**
Rands per week (Wage)	**0 - 1,**	**12 - 18,**	**18 - 25,**	**25 - 40,**	**40 +,**
	14,	**34, 16,**	**27,**	**9,**	

The interviewers found the respondents to be on the whole very willing to talk. We had purposely kept our questionnaire short, fearing that people would be unwilling to talk, but later realised that in fact, we could have asked many more questions. The interviewers were, with one exception, Indian and Malay students. They were instructed to begin the interview as follows: "There has been much talk in the newspapers about the strikes in Durban over the last few weeks. Many businessmen and trade union leaders have spoken about the strikes. We are doing a survey to find out what factory workers think about it. I hope you will help us."

Out of the 120 interviews we had only three refusals. There is of course, always a problem in assessing how honestly a particular group are likely to reply to questions about important matters. It seems to us that if there is any consistent pattern or distortion built into our replies, it is likely to be in a conservative direction.
Our questions were designed to investigate the Indian Workers' attitudes -

a) specifically, to the strikes and
b) more generally to their African fellow workers.

Since the first question was to discover to what extent respondents themselves used the categories "Indian" and "African", we had to try to make sure that we did not impose these categories in the form of our questions, and so discover only what we had ourselves created. It was impossible to frame the questionnaire without any use of the categories. African workers are forbidden by law to join the registered trade unions to which most Indian workers belong, and it was important to discover the attitude of Indian workers to this fact. Any indirect way of posing the question would necessarily have been ambiguous, so here at least we had to use the category "African". But in all cases, we introduced problems without specifying race groups, to see if the respondents would themselves categorise the various people to whom they were referring in racial terms. In the event, and quite unsurprisingly, nearly all our respondents did use racial categories in their answers.

For example, we asked those who had experienced a strike at their workplace, "What people went on strike and what people did not". All those who had experienced a partial strike described strikers and non-strikers in racial terms (e.g., "All the Africans and some Indians"), rather than in, say, job terms.

However, this result is essentially trivial. What is important is not whether Indian workers use labels such as "Indian" and "African", but rather what the significance of this racial distinction is for them. Is it the fundamental category by means of which the distinction between “them” and “us” is made, or is it merely a convenient way of describing people?

The first question that we asked was: "Everybody was worried about something during the strike. What were you worried about?”. The following table shows the main categories:

Worries		Nothing	Job		Violence
		27	**32**		**41**

Among what we have classified as job worries, the following are typical: One 32-year-old machinist said, "I was worried about my family, about the cost of living going up and wages being too low". *A* 43-year-old handyman earning R40 per week said, "I was worried about the safety of my job, and about my children." A 35-year-old machinist earning R20 per week said, "I was not scared, but I hoped that people would get what they were asking".

41% mentioned fear of trouble or violence of some sort. Slightly over half of these specifically referred to Africans here (22%). For example, one respondent said, "I was afraid of the Africans turning against the Indians… something like the 1949 riots.” Another said, “I was worried about anybody getting hurt from Africans.” Another formulated her response more specifically in relation to Africans as strikers: "I was afraid of the Africans. They wouldn't allow the workers to enter the factory gates, and the bosses threatened to fire the workers if they

didn't enter the factory gates." Thus, she seems to have been afraid of what the boss would do to her as a result of the acts of the striking African workers.

A few respondents (3%) mentioned fear of trouble from fellow workers, without specifying which fellow workers. The remaining 15% mentioned a general fear of trouble or violence or riots or inconvenience of some form or other. People answering in such general terms may have been thinking of African-provoked rioting or violence, or in terms of violence as a result of police action. It seems to be a reasonable estimate that somewhere between 25% and 35% of our sample thought that the most worrying thing about the strikes was the danger of violence from their African fellow workers, either in the form of generalised rioting, anti-Indian rioting, or specific acts against strike-breaking workers. Thus, a minority, but a substantial minority, of Indian workers saw the situation as being one of at least potential conflict between Indians and Africans, and' some at least of these formulated their opinions in familiar racist term, using expressions like, "You know what the natives are like".

However, in the context of race-conscious South Africa, it seems to us to be of greater significance that at least 60% of our sample were not concerned, or not significantly concerned, about this issue, and we believe that the responses to our other questions, which reveal much more solidarity than conflict, bear out this interpretation. The remaining questions dealt with two topics:

a) the actual strikes; and
b) the general attitude towards trade unions and African workers.

A. The Strikes

Forty-two per cent of our sample reported that there had been a strike or work stoppage of some kind or other at their workplace. This figure is certainly not accurate, as there was probably some confusion about what actually constituted a strike. More people actually described

what happened in their firm in answer to later questions than admit that a strike took place in the initial answer. However, the discrepancies are not large, and we shall ignore them. Just over one-half of these reported that everybody (excluding the Whites) at their firm went on strike. Over one quarter said that only the Africans did so, and about one-eighth said that some Indians joined them. Thus, the majority of the strikes had some Indian support. However, they also said that not all this support was entirely voluntary. Of those who actually went on strike, about one-sixth gave no reason for having done so.

Of the rest about half said that they struck because they wanted higher wages, and the other half said that they were scared of the African workers, or otherwise intimidated. However, given that the strikes were illegal for Indians as well as for African workers, it may be that there is some exaggeration involved here. In any event, the answers indicate that about half of those who gave reasons for striking were striking together with the Africans, rather than out of fear of them.

Of those who gave reason for not striking, more than one-third said that they were, in fact, satisfied with their conditions. More than one quarter referred to their unions. (Sixty percent said that they belonged to unions). Most of these pointed out that only a union could legally call a strike, some said that their unions had specifically advised them not to strike. About one-tenth said that they were afraid of losing their jobs, that they were afraid of the boss, or that there was no unity, and about 15% said that they did not strike because nobody else did at their workplace. One said that he did not know that there were any strikes on at the time.

(b) General Attitudes

We introduced the question of relations with African workers through a discussion of trade unions. After two questions about the respondents' union membership, we asked the following questions:

	Yes	No	Depends
Do you think it is better if all workers in one industry belong to the same trade union, or should there be different trade unions for different people? -	**82%**	**9%**	**--**
Do you think African workers at your factory should be allowed to join your Union? -	**74%**	**15%**	**--**
If African workers of a factory go on strike, do you think that Indian workers at the factory should join them?	**76%**	**12%**	**11%**

Clearly, a few of the respondents understood the first question as referring to Indian workers doing different jobs. However, the answers to the first two questions broadly confirm one another and show that three-quarters of our sample see Africans as fellow workers who should have the same rights as other workers. We asked them to give reasons why they thought that African workers should belong to the same unions. Over half of those who were in favour of this answered in terms of the idea that both groups are workers earning the same wages and facing the same problems. For example, a tablehand in a clothing factory, earning R11.01 per week, said "They are all humans and all workers, so they should be treated alike". A 29-year-old foreman earning R29 per week said, "The trade union is the only instrument which represents the interests of the people to the employer", and a R22 per week knitwear worker said, "They should be with us because they work with us". Of the other, nearly one-fifth pointed out that it would make the workers stronger if they were together in one union.

The other main reason, given by over one-tenth of the sample, was that such an arrangement would help the African workers. Thus, there is a highly significant pattern of solidarity with and sympathy for African workers.

That this is not universal is indicated by the 15% who were not in favour of one union. They gave a variety of reasons. One-third of this group (5% of the whole sample) mentioned fear, and about another third mentioned the idea of the Africans being "different". A few others said that Africans do different jobs. One machinist, earning R17.10 per week, said, "They don't understand what a union is all about. They don't like unions anyway." However, this man said that Indians should nevertheless join African strikers because "We are all in one firm, so if they receive a raise then we receive the same."

Looking at the reasons given by the others in favour of striking with Africans, we can see that there is still an element of fear present. A little less than thirty percent of those in favour (21% of the sample) made some reference to this in their explanations. For example, the knitwear worker quoted above said, "If everybody is united together then there will be no trouble. The Africans won't hit us."

But more than two-thirds of those in favour refer to the identity of interest between Indian and African workers. Twenty-seven percent of the sample refer to the fact that they are all workers sharing the same problems. Twenty percent refer to the virtues of solidarity and unity. Eight percent refer specifically to the belief that they will also get raises if they strike. For example, a 50-year-old foreman in the Corporation gardening department, earning R92.50 per month said, "Indians should join the strike in order to improve their conditions as the Indians and Africans are both receiving low incomes. The African is worse off than the Indian." Thus, the sense of solidarity outweighs the sense of fear. And even the fear element is socially significant, in that it would seem that those who are afraid are more afraid of what Africans will do to them if they don't join with them than they are of what the employers will be able to do to them if they do join the strikes. That is, the fear

leads them to see it as being in their interest to co-operate with the Africans rather than with the employers.

Among the 11% who are against joining in strikes, the main reason given, by about one-third of this group, is that they have different jobs, and a few others specify that the Africans are only labourers. The other reasons are that Indian workers have a union and that strikes would lead to losing their jobs. But only 1,7% of the sample, or 2 of the people that we interviewed, thought that this possibility was sufficient to keep them out of the strikes. Of that 11% who said that they would join a strike under certain circumstances, most elaborated by saying that they would do so if there was a good reason at the time, or if their needs were the same as those of the strikers.

We asked one final question in an attempt to assess the extent to which these issues were seen in directly political terms, Genuine political activity among the Indian community was effectively repressed during the sixties by the banning of most of the more outspoken leaders, and by the fact that the Congress Alliance, with which the most active Indian political organisation, the Natal Indian Congress, was associated, was virtually driven underground, with the result that some leaders fled the country and others were imprisoned after being found guilty of engaging in various underground activities, However, in the last few years there has been at least a minor revival of direct political activity. On the one hand, the government-created South African Indian Council (SAIC) has provided a platform for conservative government-appointed Indian politicians, who have voiced some criticism of certain aspects of present government policy, while on the whole accepting the idea of Indian "separateness". On the other hand, the Natal Indian Congress has been revived, and a new organisation, the Black Peoples Convention, which includes Indian members and preaches black solidarity, has been created, The Natal Indian Congress itself, although a sectional organisation in terms of membership, also has a policy of solidarity with Africans, and is in favour of a "non-racial" society, Thus, both these groups see the political future of the Indian people in terms of co-operation with Africans against the present system, whereas the

most frequent SAIC spokesmen tend to think more of co-operation with the present power-holders in an attempt to alleviate their position. We thought the relative support for these three organisations could give us some further insight into worker attitudes to this issue. As spokesmen from all three bodies had issued press statements during the strikes we asked: "Several political leaders and organisations made statements during the strikes, which of the following organisations do you think best represents your interests:

BPC, NIC, SAIC or None?"

The question is a little ambiguous since it might be interpreted as referring specifically to the content of the statements which many of our respondents may not have seen. In addition, there is still a considerable amount of fear associated with the very idea of political activity, which might lead respondents not to answer honestly, so one should not exaggerate the significance of the results:

Which represents your interest?

Don't know,	None,	BPC,	NIC,	SAIC,	All Trying,
26%,	29%,	9%,	16%,	15%,	4%,

The category "none" probably overlaps with the Don't Knows and does not necessarily indicate a reflective rejection of the policy of all three groups. Although the small lead of the NIC is obviously not a statistically significant fact that the two radical groups together receive considerably more support than the conservative SAIC is significant, especially as any falsification of answers is likely to run in favour of the pro-government group. Of course, we cannot generalise this proportion to the opinions that the other respondents might have had, had they been better informed, but at least we can say that among those working-class Indians in our sample who are sufficiently interested in the rather distant political scene to have formed some opinion on the relative merits of these organisations, the majority favour those which have a "Pro-African" policy. Furthermore, this result is clearly

consistent with our findings on the attitudes of our respondents to the more immediate and obvious issues of the workplace.

Our sample was relatively small, so when it is broken down into subcategories, in terms of sex, age, earnings, education and type of industry, these subcategories become very small indeed. Nevertheless, they can be used to give us some idea of what kind of workers are most likely to display a lack of solidarity with Africans. The women, 26% of our sample, are mainly young, poorly paid, and with a low standard of education. All except two of them earn less than R18 per month and have a standard six or less education, whereas only about one-quarter of the men fall within this combined category. It is amongst these young women that the highest proportion of Anti-African feeling is found. Proportionately, more than twice as many women as men mentioned Africans in answering the question "What were you worried about during the strikes?" (42% to 15%). Whereas all but one of the women answered in favour of one trade union for one industry, the proportion of those in favour drops to just under 60% when the question is rephrased to refer to Africans. On the other hand, the proportion of men in favour actually rises slightly from 77% to just over 80% (although this is not a statistically significant increase). Furthermore, a significant proportion of the women explain their refusal of African membership with reference to fear, while only one man does so.

Although more women were actually involved in the strikes, this factor does not correlate with anti-African feeling. In fact, half the women who struck say that they did so because they wanted more money, and thus identified themselves with the strike, while there is a slightly greater tendency for men to say that they struck through fear. The problem is to know whether these individuals have this attitude because they are women, or because they are young, poorly educated and poorly paid. Age is definitely not a factor since young men show no difference in attitude from older men. It is difficult to disentangle the other factors. However, one additional point is that two-thirds of our women respondents are from the garment and textile industries. A fair proportion of them work in small all-Indian factories, and this may also

be a factor in explaining their attitudes.

There have been earlier studies indicating greater ethnocentrism on the part of Indian women than on the part of Indian men. For example, in a study conducted amongst students in 1960, van den Berghe found that Indian women expressed a considerably greater attitude of "social distance" towards members of other groups. He comments as follows:

“It is interesting to note that the sex difference (in the amount of social distance expressed) is greater among Indians, the group among which women are most sheltered from outside contacts. The Indian taboo against gainful employment of women is strictest, and Indian women, both Hindu and Muslim, are still restricted to a greater extent than Europeans and Africans in their movements outside the home (Van den Bergh p. 57)"

This factor could not obviously apply to any great extent in our case, since our sample is of working women. Nevertheless, it may contribute to some extent, insofar as the expectation that the girl will remain in the home would probably lead to a different mode of socialisation.
There are two opposing possible explanations of how the work situation might exacerbate such initial socialisation. It may be that working in all-Indian factories, and hence having no contact at work with Africans, leads to prejudice through ignorance, while this prejudice is obviated for the men who work with Africans. On the other hand, it may be that these women, being the worst paid of all Indian workers, and so probably the least skilled, feel themselves to be the most vulnerable to competition from African workers. They may, therefore, interpret the suggestion that Africans should join their Union as a suggestion that Africans should take their jobs. Probably elements of both these factors operate, but our data doesn’t enable us to give any more definite answer.

Our main conclusion from this survey is that, although there is still a certain amount of anti-African fear and prejudice among Indian workers, nevertheless the majority of them see Africans as fellow

workers. Indian participation in the strikes was quite considerable, and most Indian workers are in favour of institutionalising their solidarity with African workers in combined trade unions. The degree of expressed solidarity surprised us, and we believe that it has great social and political significance. Although it is not possible to assess exactly what role the strikes themselves played in influencing Indian opinion, the facts that:

a) they were conducted peacefully, without any repetition of the feared 1949 riots; and
b) that they led to wage increases for many Indian workers,
are likely to have increased the feeling of Indian-African solidarity.

C. The White Public

As has already been pointed out, the English-language press reacted very sympathetically towards the strikes, and most comments they published from White members of the public were equally sympathetic. However, the press does not always reflect exactly the opinions of its readers (who are, in this case, mainly White). We therefore decided to undertake a survey of White public opinion. We intended to repeat the survey at weekly intervals throughout the period that the atmosphere of crisis associated with the strikes continued. In the event, our first survey took place as the strike-wave was beginning to recede, on Thursday, the 8th of February, and so we in fact undertook only one further survey, a fortnight later, when the strike appeared to have ended. Given the fact that, as the situation was changing daily, opinions might also be expected to change daily, we decided that the only way that we could interview a relatively large number of people within a very short period of time was by conducting a telephone-poll.

We therefore selected about 120 numbers at random from the Durban telephone directory, rejecting all those numbers which were either

business numbers, or else were the numbers of black subscribers. With a team of ten interviewers, we were thus able to conduct 85 interviews between 6 and 9 p.m. on the evening of the 8th of February. A number of telephones were not answered, but we made 100 successful calls, giving a refusal rate of 15%.

There are obviously major disadvantages in confining one's sample to those who have telephones. It inevitably introduces an upper-class bias, as the wealthier are more likely to have telephones. This is perhaps not as serious a bias in undertaking a survey of White South African opinion as it might be in conducting a general survey elsewhere, since White South Africans in fact, are nearly all that might be described as "middle class", while the telephone-less proletariat is Black. However, the age, occupational and linguistic analysis of our sample shows that it is not completely typical. First, although the ratio of English-to Afrikaans- speaking Whites in the Durban/Pinetown complex is roughly 35:1, only about 10% of our combined sample from the two surveys are Afrikaans. Secondly, between 60% and 65% of each sample are in the occupational categories of professional, semi-professional or management and executive, which is a much higher proportion than in the White population as a whole. Thirdly, of those who gave their ages, over 60% in each sample are over 45. Thus, our sample is concentrated amongst older English-speaking business and professional people. We will be able to make some allowances for the bias this introduced by analysing the results in relation to the various language, age and occupational categories but inevitably, as the categories which we want to know more about are small, there will be some loss of statistical significance. Our second survey was conducted a fortnight after the first, on Thursday the 22 February. Even though the strikes had by then clearly ended, we were interested to discover whether there was any change in attitude. In a crisis situation, one might expect either unusual willingness to compromise, which might be expected to decline once the situation was passed. In fact, however, there was very little difference between the results of the two surveys; except for a slightly higher incidence of 'Don’t Knows', and a slightly greater unwillingness to talk about it on the telephone, which led to

our having only 79 successful interviews, and a failure rate of 21%. We shall therefore in most cases consider the results of the two surveys together.

Our overall conclusion is that the unusual sympathy for Black strikers shown by the press was indeed representative of White public opinion as a whole. Just under 90% of the total sample answered the question, "Do you think the wages of Bantu workers have been too low or too high," by saying that they were too low. Only one person said that they were too high, while about 10% said that they were adequate. This was not a very surprising result. But what was more surprising was the fact that nearly 65% agreed that African workers were justified in striking. There are three reasons why this is a particularly significant result. First, strikes by African workers were illegal, so our respondents were condoning illegal acts. Secondly, White South Africans have usually been very nervous of, and hostile to, any mass action on the part of the Blacks. Thirdly, the general climate of White opinion in South Africa is anti-strike. Even strikes in Britain are usually reported and discussed from a hostile perspective, and the attitude "strikes and trade unions have ruined/ are ruining Britain" is widespread. That is, White South Africans do not on the whole recognise strikes as being a normal and respectable weapon in the conflict between management and labour over wages. This makes it all the more significant that so many Whites should approve of strikes in this instance.

Our third question concerned the police. As has been pointed out earlier, although the police were in prominent attendance at most strikes, there was no conflict between police and workers, and no attempts were made by the police to arrest strikers, even though they were probably breaking the law. Of course, in countries where trade union activity is recognised as part of the normal democratic process, the very presence of large numbers of police would have provoked a justifiable outcry. However, given the unusual political culture prevailing in South Africa, police presence was taken for granted. What is surprising is the contrast both with police action against students in Cape Town and Johannesburg. in 1972, when considerable violence

was used and many arrests were made in connection with trivial bye-law infringements, or, in many cases, where there had been no infringements whatsoever, and the contrast with police action against strikers in previous situations, when mass arrests were not uncommon. The press praised the police for their restraint in this instance, and once more we wondered whether this attitude was in fact representative of White opinion. We, therefore, asked, "Do you think the police are handling the strikers too gently or too severely"? Ninety percent of the entire sample replied that the police were behaving with perfect correctness, while only 5% thought that they should take stronger action, and about 2% thought that they were being too severe. Thus, the feeling of hostility which led many Whites at the time of the police violence against the White students to feel "Serves them right, I wish they had hit them harder", was noticeably absent from their feelings about Black strikers. There was considerable discussion in the press about the extent of government responsibility for the situation, and leaders of both major opposition parties made statements calling for immediate, though unspecified, government action. We, therefore, wanted to know whether members of the White public felt that the government was more of an immediate culprit than were the employers. We asked: "Who do you think is more responsible for the present situation, the Government or the employers?" 49% of our respondents blamed the employers; only 11% blamed the government, while 21% said that both were equally to blame. The relatively low level of immediate blame attributed to the government is especially significant given the fact that the vast majority of our respondents were probably political opponents of the government. (A recent survey conducted in the Durban area showed that under 20% of English-speaking male voters, who made up the bulk of our sample, supported the National Party) See Schlemmer Lawrence: Parties, Privilege & Prejudice: S.A.I.R.R. 1974.

8% of our sample rejected the implicit judgement in our question that it could only be the fault of either employers or the government. These 8% attributed the responsibility for the strikes to "agitators". It is of course probable that if we had offered this as one of the alternatives in our questions, then more people would have referred to agitators.

But nevertheless, the fact that most respondents did in fact accept the terms of our question, and that so few mentioned agitators, is another indication of the fact that most saw the strikes as being in some way justified, and did not accept the validity of the statements by some ministers and some employers blaming agitators.

Our last three questions were aimed at discovering people's opinions about policy in connection with African workers. We asked, first, "Do you think Bantu should have trade unions?" 65% said that they thought that African workers should have either unions or something similar to unions but not exactly unions. Only 23% came out against unions, and another 12% said that they did not know. Again, the fact that the majority support the introduction of trade unions for Africans, which would be a major policy change, and is not even supported by the United Party at present, is highly significant. In the survey referred to above and conducted in 1971-72, a similar question was asked. Respondents were presented with the statement, "The Bantu should be allowed to form recognised trade unions" and were invited to either agree or disagree. Sixty per cent of the English-speaking respondents and 45% of the Afrikaans-speaking respondents at that time agreed with the statement, while 33% and 51% respectively, disagreed. From a comparison of these figures, it is difficult to tell whether there has been any shift in opinion on this issue as a result of the strikes. It is important to note also that when, in the previous survey, the statement was re-formulated as follows: "Legally recognised Bantu trade unions would be far too dangerous to be allowed in South Africa", the percentage of those in favour of unions fell to 50% and 31% respectively. A similar effect might have occurred in the present survey if the question had been formulated differently. However, given the fact that the question was asked at a time of crisis, it is probable that some reflection of the idea of danger was already present in our answers, and consequently, a reformulation would not have brought about such a considerable change.

Our next question was a very general one: "What do you think should be done about the situation now?" Just under two-thirds replied that

wages should be raised. 8% said that some form of negotiating body should be created, while 5%, all but one of whom were interviewed in the first sample, believed that some form of punitive action against the strikers was required. 5% said that nothing special needed to be done, and 14% said that they did not know.

Finally, we asked, "Has the present unrest changed your opinions on any important issues?" It seems to us to be significant that 30% of the sample admitted that their opinions had been changed. 12% said that they had been brought to realise that wage rates for Africans were too low, and 9% said that they had for the first time been made aware of the power of the African workforce, of the insecurity of the Whites, or of the danger of the situation. 2% mentioned the need for improved communications between workers and employers, and 7% said that their opinions had been changed, but did not specify how. Of course, both questions and answers are very vague, but if the strikes did lead to changes in the opinions of as many as 30% of the White population, then they were politically very important indeed.

If we consider the responses in terms of the categories of sex, age, language and occupation, perhaps the most interesting fact is that there is not a great amount of variation in the answers. The most interesting of these categories is language. As might have been expected, Schlemmer and Turner found in their study of "Political motivation among white voters in Durban", that language was the most important indicator of opinion. Very large differences of opinion between members of the two language groups were found.

Unfortunately, our total sample of 164 individuals contained only 17 Afrikaners, which is a very small number from which to generalise. However, it is large enough for very considerable differences of opinion to have emerged if they had existed. In fact, there is very little difference between the two groups. The following table illustrates some of the important similarities, as well as two interesting differences:

English:

Wages too low:		**Strike just:**		**Blame Employers:**	
88%		64%		45%	
African Unions:		**Realised underpaid:**		**Punish strikers**:	
58%		10%		7%	
Afrikaans:					
88%	65%	88%	54%	29%	6%

The two differences are that a much higher percentage of Afrikaans respondents blame the employers and that 29% say that the strike changed their opinions by bringing them to realise that African workers were underpaid. If this is indeed typical, it is a highly significant result. Schlemmer found in his survey that a much higher percentage of Afrikaaners compared to the English agreed with the statement: "this constant talk of Black poverty is all too often exaggerated" (See Schlemmer p22). The strikes may therefore have opened many of those eyes.

We divided our sample occupationally into the following four categories:

1. Professional, semi-professional and creative; this category includes such people as teachers, architects, nurses, designers and so on.
2. Entrepreneurs, executives and senior civil servants.
3. White-collar employees such as clerks, sales representatives and technicians.

4. Routine non-manual, skilled and semi-skilled manual workers.

When making comparisons between the groups we are working with small samples. There are in fact no large variations, but the following are at least suggestive:

	Wages not too low	Employer's fault	No African Organisations:	Changed Opinions
Professional	5%	43%	30%	40%
Business	17%	45%	17%	19%
White Collar	12½%	53%	17%	37%
Blue Collar	12½%	60%	30%	23%

The professionals are considerably more sympathetic on the wages issue than are any other group but are relatively more opposed to African unions than are businessmen. This is a surprising result, although regretfully businessmen do not seem to have changed their minds very much as a result of the strike. It may be, however, that they are merely less used to admitting that they have changed their minds than are members of other social categories. It is interesting that blue-collar workers are most likely to blame employees for the situation. This is at least a small indication that some of their own "class problems consciousness" may enter into their appreciation of the problems of fellow workers divided into them by racial barriers. But a higher percentage still remains opposed to any form of African worker representation. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that workers have been amongst the strongest opponents of African trade unions, and the fact that less than a third of those in our sample express opposition is encouraging.

Our general conclusion from this survey is that the white opinion was very sympathetic towards the strikers. This applies to both English and Afrikaans-speaking Whites. A clear majority considered that the strikes were justified and believed that African workers should be permitted to 'form organisations. From our survey data, we cannot draw any firm conclusions about the extent to which the strikes actually helped to change White opinion, although a good proportion of our respondents

say that it did change their opinion s. In any event, it seems reasonable to conclude that White opinion in Durban, is now more sympathetic towards the problems of Black workers than has previously been the case. The strikes probably played an important role in precipitating or crystallising this sympathy.

D. Employers

A list was compiled of 96 firms which had had strikes during January and the first two weeks of February 197J. Using a set of random numbers 26 firms were selected. These firms were sent letters addressed to the managing director in each case, explaining why the survey was being undertaken and that an interview was being requested. One interviewer carried out the interviews during the second half of March and the month of April. It was_ not always possible to see the managing director - some firms had their head office s in other cities or the managing director was away - but in nearly all cases interviews were conducted with top factory management. This was done to get an overview of the particular situation in each firm and to be able to determine what the overall policy of the firm was.

Even through some opinions expressed during the interviews may have been personal, the person interviewed was in a position to influence company policy. Reference will, therefore, be made to the "firm" in the report, rather than to the individual. Nineteen of the 26 firms responded favourably and granted interviews, four refused interviews and three delayed beyond the deadline that had to be set. Although reasons for refusal were asked, and none were given.

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The time that it took to conduct an interview ranged from ½ hour to its hours. Some questions were difficult to answer briefly and the interviewer has had to "extract" a yes/no answer from a more general reply or discussion in some cases. The replies from six firms were received as a common statement through an employers' association. This was most unsatisfactory as individual replies were given to only two questions (A. l. - employees in various race groups; B.6. - how long

did the strike last). Several questions were deemed to be "irrelevant" to the work stoppage s or the enquiry, many of the replies were couched in virtually meaningless public relations jargon. Nevertheless, we have been able to extract some information, The fact that we were only able to have 13 proper interviews among the 26 firms approached, means that our results are virtually useless for purposes of statistical gene realisation.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections s and the results will be discussed under these broad headings.

(a) What factors led to the strikes.
(b) What exactly the workers do during the strike.
(c) What changes, if any, the employer felt it useful to make as the result of the strike.

A. What factors led to the strikes?

Under this heading, we were interested in establishing the general characteristics of the firm and its labour force.

The firms interviewed _ employed a total of approximately 12 750 Africans; 3 542 Indians; 766 Coloured people and 2 633 Whites. The number of Whites is slightly understated, since four firms only gave figures for weekly paid workers, and two gave no figures at all for white workers. Both the total numbers employed, and the proportions of the different groups employed varied greatly. The total employment ranged from 145 to 4 982, but most of the firms were quite large, with an average of about 100 employees.

Thus strike-hit firms seem to be larger than average. It may, however, be that strikes at smaller firms were less likely to be reported in the press, and so to come to our notice in all but two firms there were more African than Indian workers.

The percentage of Africans in the total workforce varied from 100% to 70%. A rough estimate of the average percentage gives Just under 60% African, and just over 20% each for Whites and the combined total for Indians and Coloured people.

Most of the firms seemed to have little idea of how many of their workers were migrants. Only one firm gave precise figures. The six who answered jointly said that the question was irrelevant. Of those firms that did reply, four said that most of them were urbanised. The reply of the one firm that gave accurate figures is particularly significant. Eight hundred and fifty of its 1000 Africans are contract workers but of these, three hundred and sixty-one had over five years of service with the firm. This may be typical, and, if so, would indicate that contract - workers are not necessarily related to the firms in which they work, any differently from other workers. Their urban status is different, but their position as workers is the same. in order to assess the general position of African workers in the firms, we asked about labour turnover, training programmes for African workers, and limitations placed on the full utilisation of African labour by Government policy. Of the usable answers to the question on labour turnover, most firms had a relatively high rate, ranging from 20% to over_ 50% per annum. Turnover was particularly high in the textile firms in our sample. Most firms felt that there were limitations placed on their utilisation of African labour, and referred to various aspects of job reservation, whether imposed by the Government or by the unions. About half the firms which answered the question on training programmes and that they had special training programmes for African workers and most of those who had no such programmes explained that this was because they only employed Africans as labourers. It is difficult to know which is the cause and which is the effect here. Some of these firms had complained about the limitations placed on them by job reservation, but others had not, and some of the firms limited by job reservation also had training programmes. The question of the lack of " communication" between workers and management was widely regarded as an important strike cause. It is, therefore, significant that eleven of our 19 firms claim to have had some form of "works committee'' in existence before the strike, although four did describe these works committees as "loose"

and "passive". This is a surprisingly high figure, particularly in the light of official figures indicating a very small number of such committees in Durban. This is partly a problem of definition, and of the degree of formality of the committee. Nevertheless, these replies would seem to indicate that works committees are not likely to play an important mediatory role within the firms. Ten of the eleven firms with works committees say they had no advance warning of the strikes. Committees say they had no advance warning of the strikes. The eleventh received a warning through a note stuck up in the lavatories demanding an increase of 50 cents an hour, but not through the works committee. None of the firms seems to have made use of the works committees to negotiate during the strikes. This may simply mean that in fact all 11 of the works committees were exceptionally passive, but we believe that it is more likely that this failure is related to structural weaknesses in the works committee system itself. The degree of dependence of all members of such a committee on the employers makes it difficult for them to be anything other than passive. It is interesting that only one of the firms with a works committee before the strikes answered our later question about the desirability of works committees in the negative. All the others still seem wedded to the idea, despite its manifest failure in their own firms. The one who rejected the idea said that the workers saw the works committee members as stooges of management. Of those who did not have a works committee, most seemed to use the "Induna" system of issuing instructions and, possibly, receiving complaints through appointed "leaders'' · In two cases the only mode of communication involved in formal contact whenever the manager walked among the workers.

B. What happened during the strike?

14 of the 19 firms, including 10 of the 11 firms with Works committees say they had no advance warning of the strikes. Once the strike had started, only 8 of the 19 engaged in some kind of negotiation with the workers. interviewees had the impression that in 6 of these cases, management had merely spoken through an elected committee to the mass of workers, but that no real negotiation took place. One firm said that the registered trade

union in the industry had unsuccessfully tried to negotiate, while in only one instance does there seem to have been a negotiating process which included offer and counter-offer between management and an elected representative committee. This same firm gave workers the assurance that the police would not be called in and that there would be no victimisation, "so that we would have the workers' confidence next time".

17 of the 19 firms claimed that there had been agitators and intimidators, but of these, ten specified that they were referring to activists among their own workers, rather than to outsiders. Three firms claimed to have seen African s from outside the firm talking to their workers, while two said that they had seen acts of intimidation. Not much concrete evidence was offered on this score, one firm warned - the interviewer that other firms would be "using this excuse to cover their own mistakes", but we cannot necessarily endorse that judgement. 1 2 of the 19 firms said that the Police had been on hand during the strike, and two mentioned that the security police had also been present. Only 6 of the firms, however, said that they had actually called the police.

In 15 cases, the indunas and Black office staff also joined the strike but of these, 5 firms said that it was as the result of intimidation and that they had been sent home as protection. The average strike lasted 26 working hours, but the variation was between half an hour and seven days. Only two firms were willing to make an estimate of the financial cost. Each had about 530 African workers, and they estimated that they had lost about R 2000 in a 1½ hour strike, and R7000 - R8000 in a three days strike, respectively.

In the majority of cases, the strike was handled by top management. The personnel officers seem to have played a marginal role. A Bantu Labour Officer at tended all the strikes, but only two firms say that this government official played any role in getting the workers back to work. All the firms which gave meaningful answers to the question " how was the stoppage ended?" say that wage increases were either given or promised. This bears out the impression that nearly all strikers were successful, Seven of the firms also paid their workers for the duration of the stoppage. Only four

firms admitted to having sacked any workers as the result of the strikes, and in each case the number given was small, in spite of the fact that the firms gave wage increases, 11 of the 19 thought that the wage demands were unjustified, two because increases were to have been given shortly in any case, and one because he disagreed with the form it took, one complained that his main competitor's workers went back for Rl2, while his workers insisted on more than this. Fourteen firms admit ted to having given increases larger than they would have given anyway.

C. What changes have been made as a result of the strikes?

Only seven firms referred to changes other than wage increases that they were considering making. Of these, five were attempting to improve communication through works committees or other ways of involving workers in the firm, one was regarding workers, and one was trying to cut down on its African workforce. All nineteen, however, said that they had plans for further wage revision in the coming year (which perhaps in some cases conflicts with the previous claim that they did not consider the wage demands to be justified). Twelve of the firms said that the increases which had been given would not affect the long-term profitability of the firm, but six others felt that their profitability had been affected. Two of these said that they operated in a very competitive market, and so would not be able to pass the increase on to the consumer, one said that they had a large unskilled labour force and it would be difficult to improve productivity.

Inspite of the apparent failure of works committees before the strikes, only 3 firms said that they were against them. One said that they "encouraged discontent" is that the committee felt that it had to raise grievances, one said that they were not effective as a means of communication (the works committee at this factory had had a meeting on the day before the strike and had not raised any major matters) and the third felt that it was a form of trade unionism.

Of the 16 firms who were in favour of having works committees three

qualified their support by stressing that they would not have statutory works committees (In one case it was said that the firm did not have any faith in the effectiveness of the Department of Labour) and seven firms gave guarded answers and said that they were investing a ting "methods of making the works committee more effective ". One of the firms said that it preferred the Induna system, but would accept a works committee if the workers wanted it.

Four firms found only advantages in the system of works committees. Reservations were voiced by fifteen firms. These included the lack of experience and education of the African worker (four firms), lack of trust by the workers because they felt that the works committee members were Stooges of management (one firm) the fact that wages are not discussed (two firms mentioned this but did not specify why this should be the case). Seven firms said that they were trying to make it work or to "promote the idea".

The firms had mixed opinions about trade unions. Only four firms both had registered trade unions in their industries and were willing to comment on them, and none of these seemed to think that the unions were of any use. However, 12 firms answered a general question about the advantages and disadvantages of trade unions. Of these 5 were in favour, and 7 were opposed to them. Those in favour felt that a trade union improved communication, and one mentioned the desirability of the union being able to enforce a uniform wage structure. Those who were opposed to unions objected to their alleged political tendencies, to their power and to the fact that they were only interested in more money, to the undesirability of talking to "people from outside your factory", and finally to their enforcement of job reservations in South Africa.

Only four of the firms were in favour of trade unions for African workers. Ten of those opposed to the idea gave no reason. Four expressed fear of the power that it would give the workers. One of these said, " It would improve a lot of the Africans, but the employers would be in a worse position." Two firms said that Africans were in various ways too inexperienced to have trade unions. One said that as a result of this they would be "defeated in

debate" in the Industrial Council. A number of firms also repeated the point, about the desirability of dealing only with their own workers.
Eight of those interviewed said that they had not changed their attitudes on any important issues as a result of the strikes, although one of these said that he had become "more anti - university though". Of the rest, the six who gave a joint answer said that "cost of living had exceeded minimum wages in some areas and this matter is being attended to". Four others mentioned the necessity for improving wages and conditions, while one said that every White worker could no longer expect to have his "boy" to carry his tools.

Our general impression is that, although management has been made aware that there are problems, they minimize the real extent and urgency of these problems. They do not seem to be in touch with the workers' situation, nor with the urgent necessity for immediate and large-scale change in a number of fields, for example, in attitudes towards workers, wages, working conditions and training, promotion and communication.They seem to believe that they will be able to establish their customary control of the workforce means a few relatively minor concessions. This is epitomised in the paternalistic argument against trade unions, "we would prefer to talk to our own people." It seems that the lesson that "their own" people will not talk to them through the existing channels has been ignored.

CHAPTER 3.

" THIS THING CAME FROM GOD ".

D. (Why Durban)

The strike is the ultimate weapon in industrial disputes. For a strike to occur, three conditions are necessary. First, there must be a grievance of some kind. Secondly, there must be some obstacles in the. way of that grievance being resolved by negotiation. Thirdly, there must be some immediate factor which triggers off the process. In some cases, this may be

the grievance itself, but in other cases, the basic grievance may be a long-standing one, which only leads to a strike because of some other factor. In the case of the Durban strikes, the grievance was low wages, and the obstacle to settling the problem by negotiation was a combination of the absence of any usable negotiating machinery and of the unwillingness of management to consider the needs of African workers. However, the grievance is a long-standing one, almost as long-standing as the history of industrial employment in South Africa. And the obstacle to a negotiated settlement of the problem is equally long-standing. Wages for African workers have always been very low, and most families have been below the. breadline. The negotiating machinery has never really existed, and this also applies to the rest of S.A. Why, then, did this situation erupt into strikes, specifically in Durban, and specifically in January 1973?

Low wages, increasing cost of living, increased transport costs and lack of adequate bargaining machinery created the underlying grievance climate which made the strikes possible.
But none of these factors is peculiar to Durban. Wages for African workers vary throughout· the country, but they vary only between low and very low.

There are no fully reliable comparative statistics, but the 1971-72 wage survey undertaken by the Productivity and Wage Association is probably adequate for our purposes.

The Association sent out 8 852 questionnaires and received only 1 086 replies, which means that the sample is very much self - selected. As the Survey points out " It is possible that those employers who have been most conscious of the necessity to upgrade African employment practices are the same employers who have responded to this survey: " Thus it may be assumed that the results of the survey show a somewhat higher average wage than actually obtained. However, it is unlikely that there would be any very great variation from centre to centre in this respect. That is, it is probable that the better-paying employers in each centre would reply, which means that we may safely use the results

to compare the rough magnitude of difference between wages in the different sectors. Table 1 gives the figures for the main industrial areas in South Africa. The wages are given for eight grades, 1 and 2, since nearly 60% of the workers described fall into these two categories.

Table 1. The average weekly wage for African workers: all industries.

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Witwatersrand Johannesburg & Central Area	10. 53	12. 33	13. 98	16. 01	19. 52	24. 30	23. 84	23. 84
West Rand	11. 54	12. 08	13. 03	16. 54	16. 28	22. 07	24. 55	24. 55
East Rand	11. 53	14. 18	15. 31	16. 66	21. 40	27. 19	10. 62	36. 47
Cape Town / Wynberg								
Port Elizabeth / Uitenhage	11.77 / 12.31	14.77 / 13. 35	16.87 / 14. 77	17.20 / 16. 87				
East London	6. 57	8. 88	10.20	11. 62				
Bloemfontein	6. 73	8. 69	9. 65	11. 32				
Durban / Pinetown	10. 45	12. 17	13. 03	16. 16				
Pretoria	9. 37	11. 02	11. 76	14. 17				

19. 98	23. 61	10. 62	38.
18. 72	22. 28	19. 26	28. 25
12. 88	13. 96	16. 38	19. 74
13. 33	12. 78	15 . 14	57. 24
18. 87	22. 40	26. 51	28. 53
16. 61	18. 42	24. 39	25. 85

Table 5. The Percentage of African workers in each grade: all industries.

Grad	1	2	3	4
Witwatersrand Johannesburg & Central Area	30.73	25. 5	19. 13	6. 88
West Rand	30. 40	30. 91	14 . 21	4. 34
East Rand	27. 71	24. 46	20. 88	9. 75
Cape Town / Wynberg				
Port Elizabeth / Uitenhage	39. 83	27. 72	14. 92	9. 74
East London	45. 24	13. 68	15. 56	9. 56
Bloemfontein	66. 69	8. 19	11. 67	3. 60
Durban / Pinetown	26. 63	34. 64	17. 94	10. 18

5	6	7	8
6. 88	3. 92	3. 78	0. 91
4. 34	5. 11	5. 67	1. 11
6. 35	4. 77	4. 70	1. 43
3. 36	1. 02	7. 17	1. 43
4. 38	1. 49	1. 03	0. 89
7. 07	13. 96	2. 69	2. 77
1. 19	12. 78	4. 99	0. 99
4. 89	2. 43	2. 43	0. 87

Durban wages in these two categories are slightly lower than those on the Witwatersrand, although this is slightly offset by the fact that Durban has, according to the report, a slightly lower concentration in the lowest category, and slightly more workers in category 2. About two-thirds of the workers referred to on the Witwatersrand are from "Johannesburg and Central Area", and the wages for this area are not significantly different from those in Durban.

The wages for Johannesburg are slightly decreased by the very low wages paid on the mines, since miners, receiving R5, 56 in Category 1, constitute nearly 10% of the sample as a whole, and nearly 20% of those in Category l; so that if we exclude mining, the gap may be as much as R1.per week, but even this does not seem to us to be sufficiently great to account for the fact that there were strikes in Durban rather than in Johannesburg. It is interesting to note, in the light of some of the mocking comments made in the Afrikaans Press and by Nationalist politicians, that the wages in Durban were noticeably higher than those

paid in 1 the Nationalist strongholds of Pretoria and Bloemfontein. Similarly, there was no dramatic difference between the cost of living or the rise in the cost of living in Durban and in other industrial centres. Table 2 shows the PDL figures for March/April 1973, all calculated on the same basis by the Institute of Planning Research and the University of Port Elizabeth.

Table2.

	Area	**Average Family Size.**	**P.D.L (Rand)**
1.	Johannesburg	6	74. 68
2.	Cape Town	6	81. 60
3.	Durban	6	78. 13
4.	Port Elizabeth	6	78. 58
5.	East London	6	76. 63
6.	Bloemfontein	6	74. 55
7.	Pretoria	6	75. 44

Although these figures differ somewhat from those calculated by other bodies, they can be used to compare the cost of 87. for African s in the different centres and they show remarkable uniformity, although the slightly lower PDL for Johannesburg as compared to Durban does widen a little further real wage gap between Johannesburg as compared to Durban, does widen a little further the real wage gap between Johannesburg and Durban. Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the increases in the Consumer Price Index from 1961 to 19 72, and between January 1972 and January 1973.

Table 3.
Consumer Price Index 1972 (April 1970 = 100)

Area	All Iterms	Food
1. Weighted average	113. 3	113. 6
2. Cape Town	113. 7	112. 9
3. Port Elizabeth	115. 0	113. 9
4. East London	112. 4	115. 8
5. Durban	113. 1	114. 9
6. Witwatersrand	113. 4	113. 5
7. Bloemfontein	112. 5	114. 7

Table 4.
Consumer Price Index. Percentage increase
(January 1972 - January 1973)

Urban Area	All Iterms	Food Only
1. Cape Town	7. 15	9. 26
2. Port Elizabeth	8. 48	12. 44
3. East London	7. 30	8. 31
4. Durban	7. 34	9. 70
5.Witwatersrand	12. 41	9. 60
6. Bloemfontein	7. 78	12. 30

Note: The C.P.I. do not permit of inter- urban comparisons of price levels or cost of living. They do not indicate whether it is more expensive to live in one city than another. The indexes show for each

urban area independently of any of the other urban areas, the change in prices which have taken place from time to time.
Although the important food index rose faster in Durban between 1970 and 1972, Table 4 shows a reversal of this trend through 1972 itself, with the Witwatersrand being more seriously affected by the accelerating increase. Finally, the increase in third class rail fares which resulted from the removal of a subsidy to resettlement areas applied nationwide so it is probable that large numbers of workers in all centres were affected. We conclude, therefore, that although wages in Durban are a little lower than those paid in some other centres, they are by no means the lowest in the country, and the wage differential is certainly not great enough to have precipitated the strike of itself.

B. Ethnics Groups

One reason which has been suggested to explain why the strikes took place in Durban is the ethnic structure of the workforce. It differs from the workforce elsewhere in South Africa in that -
a) virtually all the African workers belong to the same Zulu ethnic group, and

b) there are a large number of Indian workers who, for various reasons, tend to be more favoured by the employers for promotion, and thereby tend to limit the upward mobility of African workers.

The structure of the workforce is certainly different from that on the Witwatersrand, where there are Africans from a large number of different language groups, and no large “intermediate “group. On the other hand, Port Elizabeth has a rather similar structure, with all the Africans being Xhosa speaking, and with a large ‘’ intermediate “ Coloured population. So Durban is not unique in this respect. Furthermore, a study of the distribution of African workers in the various job categories in different centre s shows that there is not a great difference between the Witwatersrand and Durban. If we allow once more for the concentration of miners in Johannesburg, then about

16% of African workers fall into the top four categories as opposed to ab out 10. 5% in Durban, and less than 8% in Port Elizabeth. This might indicate that in Durban, Indians do tend to take some of these job s, and so inhibit upward mobility. However, the percentage is small, and in fact in both centres the vast majority of the African workers remain in the least skilled categories. It might be that the more educated African workers, who might also be expected to take leadership roles in a strike situation, are more affected by this. That is, it might mean that there is a higher proportion of ambitious but frustrated worker among the lower grades in Durban than on the Rand. But it is also significant that the strikes nowhere took on an anti-Indian tone, and that in many cases Indian workers joined with African strikers voluntarily. There is no clear system of stratification dividing Indian and African job categories in the way that White job categories are divided from Black job categories. Many Indians work as labourers or as semi-skilled workers in -the same situation as Africans.

C. Agitators, Activists and Influances

None of the factors so far suggested as possible causes seems to us to make anything more than a marginal contribution to an understanding of why the strikes happened in Durban. So far, we have been considering possible general causative factors which might precipitate spontaneous mass -action. An alternative approach is that which postulates that what was involved was not spontaneous mass action at all, but rather an event organised by a small group of agitators" Communist agitators " were blamed by management at the first strike, at Coronation Brick and Tile. The workers at the factory indignantly rejected the allegation. In the following week, the Afrikaans newspaper Die Vaderland announced that it believed that the strikes had been caused by direct and indirect incitement (RDM 20/1/73). Four reported that police at the Frame Group of factories in New Germany had said that agitators were responsible, but that it was not possible to pinpoint them (RDM 27/1/73): Die Transvaler (1/2/73) said that agitators were definitely

responsible, but on the 5th the same paper carried contradictory articles, one saying that the situation was the result of low wages and that there were no agitators, whole another blamed the strikes on the South African Communist Party, the students' Wages. Commission and the Kwa Zulu Government. A Financial Gazette columnist, Aida Parker, said. that there was an organisation behind the strikes and that it was preparing for a general strike on the 31st May, she did not quote the sources of her information (but the fact that there was no strike on the 31 May, may be relevant for the evaluation of her other allegations). The Minister of Labour, Mr. Mara is Viljoen, also claimed that agitators were responsible, and said that the question of wages was only a smokescreen (RDM 2/2/73).

On the whole, the police did not place much blame on agitators during the strikes, Brigadier H. J. Schroder, Port Natal Divisional Commissioner of Police, said that "There was still no definite proof that agitators were behind the stoppages. Had there been we would have taken action" C S. Times 4/2/73). But a few days later General Venter, Chief Assistant Commissioner of Police said, "We are naturally fully aware that there still exists loud-mouthed trouble -a stirring minority group (D. N,8/2/73).

Four months later, the S. Express aid that a report from the Durban police had been sent to the Deputy Minister of Police. According to the newspaper, a very conservative English language organ, " The report fully spot-lighted the activities of agitators and intimidators and to what extent they influenced African workers to down tools. It has also dealt comprehensively with how agitators were able to exploit the Africans' _ wage grievances (S, Express, 10/ 6/73) ". At the time of writing, no action had been taken on this report. It is also a little difficult to understand why, if the report contains evidence of widespread illegality, it was necessary for it to be submitted to a Minister before action was taken.

The use of the concept "agitator" to explain a wide range of happenings is not restricted to White South Africans. Writing about

Brita in, Hyman comments: “A widespread assumption about strikes, even if rarely coherently formulated, is that disputes are fomented by agitators, such an interpretation seems to underlie proposals to control industrial conflict through penalties against the striking conflict through penalties against strike ‘leaders’. Widely held among politicians and owners of newspapers, this view is also cherished by many industrial managers, who ‘seek to persuade their employees and the public at large that industry is a harmony of co-operation which only fools or knaves choose to disrupt” 1 . (Hyman p, 56 - 57). Even if one were able to establish the existence of “agitators”, for a social scientist, as opposed to a confused politician, this would only be the beginning of an explanation, since one would still want to know what it was in the circumstances which made it possible for agitators to be successful. But the question of agitators” does introduce the question of leadership, in order to analyse this problem we need to replace the single category. “agitator” by the three categories of agitators, “activists”, and “ influences “.By “agitators” we shall mean people unconnected with the work situation who organise: strike for reasons equally unconnected with _ the dark situation, these reasons may be good or bad, since the most. countries it is recognised that there are situations in which it is necessary for workers to take strike action to defend their overall social and political position, and often such activity is co-ordinated by political “agitators”. A classic example of an agitator in this sense would be the young Albert Hartzog, who played an important role in organising White workers into trade unions with aims which who clearly political. There might well be grounds for arguing that African workers need agitators of this type since there certainly are political determinants which affect their economic situation, thus we use the term in an evaluatively neutral sense, rather than as a term of abuse.

By” activists”, a term suggested by one of the employer representatives whom we interviewed, we mean individuals in the work situation who take the lead in worker action, either as formal shop-stewards or as informal leaders and decision-makers. By “influences” we mean people who played no role whatsoever in calling the strike and had no direct

influence over the strikes but whose presence, activities and words in the public arena may have had an effect on the level of consciousness or of information of the worker?, and in this sense may have influenced the eventual strike action, With the aid of these three concepts, we can specify more precisely the concept of "spontaneously". The annual lemming rush of holiday-makers to the sea is an extreme example of spontaneity, in that it can happen without any co-ordination whatever between the masses of individuals concerned, The fact that others are also going to the sea is entirely irrelevant (or perhaps even a negative facto:) in the decision of any particular individual to do likewise '. In this sense, no strike, and indeed no politically significant mass action can be purely spontaneous since a strike is only a strike if workers are consciously going out with their fellows. Each worker does not just coincidentally decide that he or she is not going to go into the factory on that particular day. However, when one contrasts spontaneous with non-spontaneous action this, is not the distinction that one is making. In fact, it is useful to distinguish three different categories ' of action:

Action is taken as a result of intimidation; Planned action; and Spontaneous mass action.

We shall define spontaneous mass action as an action undertaken neither as the result of threats of violence from some group of individuals nor as a result of the planning and organising undertaken by the acknowledged leaders or representatives of the people in question. (There may of course well be an element of planning even in regard to spontaneous action, as when a particular group of people call a meeting which is then attended by a large number of people without any further attempt having been made at recruitment). Spontaneous action, then, occurs when a group of people subject to the same set of pressures and influences suddenly react in common to those pressures. One might almost say that they suddenly find themselves acting in common. Spontaneous mass action is a situation in which each individual recognises his or herself in ongoing action. Of course, the action has to be started by somebody: somebody has to be the first to say "Let's strike", but what distinguishes a spontaneous action from organised action is the way in which that idea spreads from the first person.

Spontaneity occurs when each listener says “Of course, why didn’t I think of that first”. As the action continues, leaders are likely to emerge, but even they are only influential to the extent that the others recognise themselves in what the lead er says. (Sartre’s concept of the “group confusion” describes this form of spontaneity well: see “Critique of Dialectical Reason”.)

Thus an important criterion in distinguishing, between organised action and spontaneous action must be the time lag between the initial idea and the actual action, and the pre-existence or otherwise of a formal communication network among the people concerned. The spread of spontaneous action of this kind will almost certainly depend upon and be influenced by pre-existing, informal communication networks, such as friendship groups, “homeboy” groups, of people who habitually commute together and so on. In some cases, it may be quite difficult to distinguish where organisation ends and spontaneity begins, but the question section is adequate for our purposes.

With the aid of these categories, we can now distinguish a number of different possible ways of accounting for the strikes.
1. It could be an example of “ intimidated action”,
caused either by -

a) external agitators; or
b) internal activists.
2. It could be an example of organised action,
once more led by either -
a) external agitators; or
b) internal activists.
3. It could be an example of spontaneous action, in the course of which activists played a role, and which was or was not affected in some way by general influences in the public arena.

There were allegations from both government spokesmen and from employers and employers ‘ representatives, that intimidation played a major role in the strikes. However, no real evidence was offered to back up the allegations. Despite the massive police presence at most

strikes, only one case of intimidation came to court, although there were at least 5 other isolated cases reported in the press. The following story was offered to our intermediate: by one of the employers ' organisations as evidence of intimidation.

The police were called to one relatively small firm in large numbers, and the officer in charle told the assembled workers "With us here there is no danger of intimidation. Anybody who wants to go to work can go into the factory". And, said our informant, "Nobody moved". This story was told to us to illustrate how extraordinary efficient the intimidators were, to be able to: exercise their control silently and in the presence of the political not known whether any of the other evidence on which employment-based their judgements were of higher quality.

For workers on the border of completed deprivation, a strike is an extremely serious act, in which even more possibility of major gains. Subject to such stress, and especially considering the nature of employers in South Africa, and the ubiquity of the police, there is likely to be a state of great tension. We would consider it very surprising if, in such a climate, there were not occasional threats of violence to strike-breakers. But, even if there were evidence of this, this would not indicate that intimidation was a major factor. What intimidation there was, was intimidation of a small minority by the great majority of workers, not, as some employers told us, 5% or 10% or even 20% magically intimidating the vast majority of unwilling strikers.

The absence of intimidation does not exclude the possibility that the strikes may have been organised by a group of "agitators", that is, by an underground political organisation. Once more, however, there has been no evidence of the existence of such an organisation. In particular, the worker's indifferent factories did not make any coordinated demands. Also, an organisation of this sort is accompanied by at least some overt activity, such as clandestine distribution of pamphlets and no such pamphlets come to light, nor have any of the alleged organisers been arrested. The only incident which could be remotely construed as evidence of such an attempt at organisation concerns the arrest of five young members of the Black People's Convention, a small "Black consciousness" or orientated political

party. The five had been openly distributing pamphlets at a bus rank in the middle of Durban. The pamphlet merely dealt with the question of solidarity between Indian and African workers, and there was no evidence that the BPC was doing anything other than the reaction to a pre-existing situation. Had they been involved in organising the strikes it is highly unlikely that they would have risked arrest of a number of their small membership, including a member of the National Executive by distributing pamphlets so openly.

Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility of an undetected underground organisation, but there are arguments which make this prima facia unlikely. Those political organisations which were driven underground by Government action in the 1960 ' s were dealt with relatively rapidly by the political Security Police. A number of political trials in the last few years, concerning alleged African National Congress Communist Party and other underground activities, indicate that these organisations are not having much success,'- in establishing themselves, on any other than a nominal basis. It seems highly unlikely that an organisation large enough underground organisation, but there are arguments which make this prima facia unlikely. Those political organisations which were driven underground by Government action in the 1960 ' s were dealt with relatively rapidly by the political Security Police.

A number of political trials in the last few years, concerning alleged African National Congress Communist Party and other underground activities, indicate that these organisations are not having Much success,'-establishing themselves, on any other - than a nominal basis. It seems highly unlikely that an organisation large enough to co-ordinate the actions of nearly 100 O0O workers in one hundred and fifty factories could survive undetected at the present time. The absence of any African trade unions in Durban also makes it unlikely that there existed a sufficiently extensive organised communication network amongst workers in the different factories for the workers themselves consciously to co-ordinated the strikes. A number of open organisations or movements were accused, at various times, of being behind the strikes. These were the KwaZulu Government, the Black Consciousness Movement (such organisations as the BPC, the South African Students Organisation (SASD) and the Black Workers ' Project)

and predominantly White students organisations such as the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), or the Natal University Wages Commission. Other than the incident already referred to, no evidence was produced to substantiate these ·charges. However, it is important to consider the possible role of these groups as "influences".

This involves analysing the main themes of public political and social debate in Natal prior to the strikes; and attempting to assess the extent to which African workers might have been aware of these themes. Answering the latter que stion requires an analysis of both formal and informal channels of communication, which is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, we can make a few preliminary remarks about this. The three main English-language newspapers in Durban have a fair-sized African readership. According to are cent study was undertaken by a market research firm, the readership figures for urban Africans are Daily News, 37 000 Natal Mercury, 18 O0O; Sunday Tribune, 33 O00. It may be assumed that the Sunday Times, the largest circulation South African newspaper, also has a fairly large African readership in Durban. The figures for the other three newspapers refer to total urban African reader leadership majority of those readers are probably in and near Durban. Allowing for the fact that some readers read more than one of the four newspapers in question, it might be reasonable to estimate that 40 O0O to 50 O0O Africans in Durban read one or more English-language newspapers in the course of the week. Thus it is likely that any theme widely discussed in those newspapers will also become a topic of conversation among Zulu readers, and then filter down to Zulu non-readers. In addition, there is a Zulu language weekly newspaper, Ilanga, which had an average circulation of 94 O0O in the second half of 1972 (Financial Mail, 19/4/73).

The readership is likely to be considerably higher than the circulation. Ilanga is not heavily political, but it does carry news concerning Zulu politics. Finally, radio ownership is widespread amongst Africans in Durban, and the English and Zulu news programmes, although doubtless somewhat selective, constitute another channel of information. However, according to a report in the Natal Mercury, (5/2 /73), the Zulu service made no mention of strikes until the 3rd. February, when

it began broadcasting a statement by the Minister of Labour that the strikes were inspired by agitators.

Of the three possible "influences" referred to above, none has any continuous communication medium linking it with African workers. However, Chief Buthelezi and the members of The KwaZulu Government, as well as Paramount Chief Goodwill Zwelithini, hold frequent and well-attended meetings in the African townships. The Wages Commission issues an irregular: Zulu language news sheet called "Isisebenzi"("The Worker"), which deals with industrial issues, and topics such as the PDL and the Wage Board. About 6 issues were distributed in 1972, with very variable circulation. SASO publishes a newsletter: but this has a small circulation and is written in English. None of the Black Consciousness groups has a publication aimed at popular readership. Let us now consider separately the nature of the possible information about each of these, and the possible influences which it may have had in creating the climate in which the strikes occurred.

(i) KwaZulu

The main slogan used by the workers at their meetings or when they marched was "Usuthu", which is a traditional Zulu war cry. The term was originally adopted to describe themselves by the personal followers of the Zulu King Cetshwayo, in the1850's. It referred to a particularly magnificent herd of cattle which a Zulu raiding party had acquired from the Sotho tribe. It became the war cry of the Cetshwayo party in the civil war of 1856, and after Cetshwayo's victory, it became the war-fare of all those who fell under his control. It has been negotiated specifically with the King, as when Cetshwayo 'heir, Dinizulu, was restricted to ruling over a small section of the Zulu nation, who were referred to as the Osothu. It was also been associated with the nation as a whole as in its use by Bambatha's men in the 1906 uprising, although they were not technically part of the Osothu. It has thus become a generalised Zulu slogan and is today used, inter alia, by supporters of the Zulu Royals soccer team. (For origins, see Shula Marks "Re reluctant Rebellion, page 86.) thus the use of the term in the strikes may be taken as an

index of Zulu self-assertion, at the very least as a political act. The song most frequently sung by the workers was “Nkosi Sikeleli Afrika “. This song has been adopted at KwaZulut the national anthem, but it is also the anthem of the Transkei, and, as the song of the African National Congress, has always been associated with African resistance to White rule, rather than with any tribe. Both slogan and song indicate the extent to which the workers situated themselves within the Zulu and the African political tradition. It is therefore significant that the Zulu leader, Chief Buthelezi, has been by far the most outspoken of the homeland leaders in attacking the South African government. His speeches have been widely publicised and commented on. Chief Buthelezi has been recognised as the leader in the revival of Black politics in South Africa in recent years. It seems to us probable, therefore, that his stand did constitute an indirect influence on the strikers, in so far as it indicated a new possibility of Blacks being able to take action for their rights.

(ii) Black Consciousness. It is much more difficult to assess the influence of the Black consciousness movement on African workers. Organisationally it is undoubtedly still “middle class”. The Black Workers’ Project is, as far as we can establish, inactive in Durban. (See Black Review 1972 pages 121-123.) However, the theme of Black consciousness received publicity in the English language press, and also undoubtedly influenced the rhetoric of leaders not specifically aligned with SASO, such as Mr. Leon of the Labour Party, and Chief Buthelezi, and other homeland leaders. Once more, insofar as the spread of the concept of Black consciousness was one element in the increasing Black political consciousness that preceded the strikes, it may be counted as an influence.

The main activity in 1972 was research into wage levels in particular industries, and the presentation of evidence to Wage Board investigations. It publicised the Wage Board Meetings and encouraged workers to attend, and in this way had a certain amount of direct contact with workers. It also established links with some registered trade unions and co-operated in the setting up of a General Factory Workers ‘ Benefit, which, by December 1972, had a membership of

about 2 O0O African workers in Durban. However, the Benefit Society was in no sense a trade union and had no organised communication system. The activities of the Wages commissioner received quite a lot of press publicity, and, in particular, the Commission was instrumental in popularizing the concept of the PD. L. In this way, the Wages Commission may have had an indirect influence on the sympathetic reaction of the White public to the strikes. Also, although it is probable that relatively few workers had heard of the Wages Commission, the very fact that it was active in the labour field may have been one of the factors affecting worker attitudes.

It is also important not to treat these three groups in isolation from one another and from the workers. It is likely that each influenced the other in a greater or lesser way, and that all three were in turn influenced or reinforced by increasing worker militancy in 1972, as shown in the Hammarsdale bus strike in February and the stevedore's strike in October of that year, thus there is not a one-way process of influence from someone or more elite groups to the masses. Instead, there is a changing general political climate to which a number of different groups and individuals contribute in different ways. It is worth stressing that all three groups which we have discussed were acting legally, even given the rather narrow confines provided by South Africa's legal structure, to the extent that they did influence the strike s it was very indirectly, perhaps only by helping to crystalise in the mind s of the workers the fact that they were human beings who for a long time had been treated in an inhuman way.

The Black Consciousness movement was not confined to Durban, but the Wages commission was most active in Natal although some wages commissions did begin to emerge at other English language universities in the course of 1972. Chief Buthelezi was also, of course, unique to Natal. thus these two may have been, in their different ways, elements determining the fact that the strikes took place in Durban, rather than elsewhere. But the description of these two influences cannot constitute an adequate explanation of the strikes.

The existence of such influences helps to account for the climate in which

the strike could occur.
It does not explain how and why it actually did occur.

E. Explanations

Our conclusion is that the strikes were a series of spontaneous actions by workers, which spread by imitation, and that the spread was "multiplied" by the fact that three quite independent factors happened to coincide. The first factor was the existence in Durban, strategically placed in each of the major industrial areas, of a number of factories belonging to one organisation characterised by particularly low wages and bad labour relations the frame Group. The third factor was the rise in transport costs and the rumoured train boycott. What precisely sparked off the strike at coronation brick is not clear. However, it seems to have been connected in some way with the visit of Prince Goodwill to the factory. In any event, it received wide publicity.

a) Because it involved a large workforce;
b) Because many of the workers marched through the street to reach their meetings, and
c) Because they gained a wage increase.

The workers involved were largely migrants living in a company compound, and thus relatively isolated, not being situated in a major industrial area. However, the information available in the press plus, probably, a small amount of word of mouth, was enough to spark off several other scattered minor strikes. But the strikes did not spread to the two major industrial areas of Pinetown/New Germany and Jacobs/Mobeni until the simmering unrest in Frame Group factories in each centre erupted into strikes. According to trade unionists in the textile union this unrest in any of them, if it had not been for the Coronation strikes. However, once the strikes did occur, the sight of large crowds of workers out on strike encouraged workers in neighbouring factories, and the strikes spread geographically, road by road, starting in New Germany with the Frame Group strikes on the 25th and in Jacobs/Mobeni with the Consolidated Textile Mills strike 6 days late r. Crucial to this process was there which the strike took. The workers tended to strike at the plant, rather than to stay at home, and were thus concentrated

and highly visible. The third factor was the rumoured train boycott on the 1st of February. This is the most mysterious aspect of the whole affair. It is not clear where or how it began, or even whether it actually existed at all. However, it certainly worried employers and spread the atmosphere of crisis t h rough out the industrial complex. The measures are taken by many employers to ensure that they either had labour on that day or that their workforce was out of reach of the "intimidators", undoubtedly must have helped to spread the news of the strikes to all workers. The bandwagon started to roll and everybody jumped on.

One worker, with 35 years of service, and inscribed gold watch to prove it, and a wage of R9.00 per week, was asked by a reporter whether he had not been intimidated to strike. He replied: "No, sir, this thing comes from God. I am not afraid, nobody told me to go on strike. This thing comes from God. How do you think that I can live on R9. 00? A shirt - how much must I pay for a shirt? When I get R9.00 a week how much must I save before I can buy a shirt? " (DN 4. 2. 73). The statement "this thing comes from God" aptly describes the spontaneity of a movement which results from the sudden release released of 35 years of pent-up frustration.

The spontaneity of the strike wave was also the main reason for its success, as compared with the relative failure of mass strikes by African workers in the period of high political activity in the 1950's. When the strikes were visibly led by one group making specific demands, it was relatively easy for police action to dispose of the leadership. Moreover, there was no possibility of a wide range of compromise solutions being reached at a local level. Such organised strikes constituted a much more direct threat to White dominance, their demands were non-negotiable, and the necessity, from the White point of view, for repression, was much greater. Thus an unorganised and spontaneous strike was able to achieve concrete, though limited, gains which would probably have been beyond the reach of more coordinated activity. This explanation of the strikes does not exclude the fact that, although spontaneous and wage oriented, the strikes were also political to understand this we need to understand the demands which the workers made. They usually began by demanding very large increases. Sometimes they asked for their wages to be doubled. The figure of R30,

00 per week was also often mentioned. These large demands were often interpreted as naivety or even as stupidity by White observers. Yet this interpretation is not compatible with the fact that workers usually, in fact, accepted much lower increases. It is clear that they were not expecting to get such large increases. Why, then did they demand them? We believe that this must be interpreted as a statement of rejection, an affirmation of the desire for a quite different society. Yet it was a statement made with a realistic awareness that in -fact they did not have the power to carry this out. So they returned to work with small gains, but, as our interviews show, they are no more satisfied now than they were before the strike.

CHAPTER 4

The Political response

The Durban strikes evoked a vast amount of public comment in South Africa. Attention was focused on the problems of African workers in a way which has never previously occured in South Africa. The two main points of discussion were :

1. The nature and cause of the “wage gap” between l? l ack and White incomes; and
2. the question of whether African workers should have full trade union rights.

The discussion was further fuelled by overseas reactions. A series of articles on wages paid to the employees of British showed firms in South Africa in “The Guardian” led to a parliamentary investigation in Britain. Both the original articles and the inquiry received wide publicity in South Africa. Attention. was drawn to the question of African trade unions by the special sessions on South Africa held by the ILO in June. Here we shall not attempt to review this entire ongoing debate. Instead. we shall concentrate on two key aspects: the debates in the White parliament on the strikes and associated issues · and the reaction of Black political leaders to the situation.

A. The Parliamentary debate

The strikes were taking place when Parliament assembled for the NonConfidence which begins each session. Many speakers dealt with the issue, reacting immediately to new information or rumour, as it came in.

This material is particularly interesting, since 'it shows immediate reactions to a crisis. Apart from this, the issue was debated at length on at least four other occasions: the debate on a motion praising the Government's labour policy introduced by National Party M. P. F. J. le Roux on the 13th. February '. the debate on a Private Motion calling for the legal recognition of African trade unions, introduced on 20th February by Progressive Party M. P. Helen Suzman; and the debate on the Prime Minister's Vote and the Minister of Labour's Vote during the committee stage of the Appropriation Bill, on the 24th. and 25th. April and 1st. and 2nd. May, respectively. Perhaps the most striking feature of the speeches by the Government members was the frequency with which they referred to "agitators". It is a theme which introduced by the Minister of Labour in his first speech of the session made during the strikes, elaborated on by every other Nationalist M. P. who spoke during the debates, and was still present in the closing speech by the Minister in the debate on his Vote some three months later. What was surprising about this is the paucity of evidence which was offered and the fact that though the charge was repeated over and over again, it was not in fact substantiated. It is worthwhile analysing this phenomenon in some detail since it gives us some important insights into the thinking of an important sector of the 'White group on this issue. Marais Viljoen, Minister of Labour introduced the agitator theme as follows: "Will the inciters, the people who fare behind se agitators, then pay the higher wages which are being demanded by the Bantu? Of course, not for the objective of these inciters is in fact to cause chaos in South Africa. " He then went on to adduce as his only piece of evidence for the existence of these inciters, a pamphlet is sued to various organisations in the previous October by the Black Workers ' Project, which. speaks in very general terms of the problems of Black workers organisations. He then

said that this was an organisation in which Nusas played a part and finally that "the aim of the Black workers is similar to that of students in overseas countries, inter alia, in France to bring about a change in the social order of (that) country". (Hansard Cols 49 - 53) .

The Nusas theme was repeated again by M. Henning M. P. on 24th. April. He offered as one of his main pieces of evidence a press report of a speech in which United Party Senator Swanepoel was reported to have said that students who appeared before the Schlebusch Commission had there admitted their role in the strikes (Col. 4920). Apart from the fact that the Schlebusch Commission, had stopped hearing evidence from students sometime before the strike s' occurred, Mr. Henning was apparently unaware that Senator Swanepoel had himself admitted that he had no evidence to substantiate his allegation, which h., according to the Senator, was based on "politicians ' gossip " and a statement by the Minister of Labour, Mr. Marais Viljoen" (Sunday Tribune, 1/4/ 73). Mr. Henning 1 other evidence was a pamphlet issued by the Wage and Economic Commission of the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg, in connection with a hearing of the Wage Board. The pamp that apparently y encouraged workers to attend the Wage Board sitting, and to put their demands, which they were legally entitled to do. Finally, he produced a quotation from the Financial Gazette, which also referred rather misleadingly to this and other similar pamphlets. The only other piece of evidence was offered by the Minister of Labour in his speech on 2nd May in which he said that the African members of the Durban Regional Labour Committee, who described as a response Black leaders", had said that " the way in which those Zulu workers acted was inconsistent with their nature as they knew their own people. They had no hesitation in mentioning by name the Student's Wages Commission of the University of Natal, which had been responsible for a great deal of the incitement in this regard ". He then went on to refer to the Wage Board meeting in Johannesburg, after the strikes, apparently to back up his allegation that the students in Natal had had a hand in the strikes.

It is important also to consider the motive ascribed to these "agitators" and 'inciters" by Government spokesmen. As we have already seen the

Minister of Labour said that their objective was to cause chaos in South Africa". He repeated this further on in his speech, where he said that "agitators" in most cases used a matter such as wages as a convenient means of bringing factories to a halt - with only one objective in mind, viz. "to bring about general chaos in South Africa" (Col. 53), · However, a few sentences later he said that the agitators ' aim was, "to bring out a change in the social order".. which was scarcely the same thing as "bringing about chaos s' but the Minister's id e as here are symptomatic of the Manichean thinking typical of many White South Africans, who see their society as threatened by nameless horrors with no objective other than the creation of chaos. No reason is given as to why anyone should want to create chaos. Having defined the world in these terms, they then equate any change in the existing social order with this undefined chao s. It would be out of place here to attempt to investigate the historical roots of this evidently pathological mode of thought. We only wish to point out how convenient a set of categories it is for misunderstanding reality.

All 'of the speeches to which we have referred, reveal a mixture of vague allegation, irrelevant illustrations (Johannesburg pamphlets for Durban strikes) and unsubstantiated innuaendo (workers students, France). But given the extreme weakness of the actual evidence presented, it is important to ask why the allegation was repeated over and over again. The answer, we believe, is to be found scattered in a number of speeches. It is contained in its most concise form in a speech by P.R. de Jager: Sir, from the knowledge that I have of that kind of Bantu, I want to say that the organisation did not come from them alone; it came from someone else". (Col. 15483, 1/ 5/ ?:3).

The same theme has been elaborated on previously by Mr. de Jager, in his contribution to the No -Confidence Debate. After saying that "there are many labourers who do not deserve to be paid R6 or R7 per week" he went on: "I do not think that this originated amongst those workers. I know them and I am convinced, as regards the labour done by the Bantu in Natal and the level at which they move that they do not it in them to come together and to agree that a thousand of them should strike. There are other influences behind those strikes. I am as convinced of

this as I am of anything in the world" (Col. 90 -91 , 5/2/73). That is, Mr. de Jager's belief in agitators is anterior belief that has no need of actual evidence. Simply he believes that Africans are inferior beings who do not have the intelligence to come together and organise a strike. Since they do not have the intelligence to do it themselves, somebody (who is al. most certainly White, hence the introduction of Nusas) must be doing it for them, thus what is at the root of this type of reaction to the strikes is the crudest form of race prejudice. The Minister of Labour while discussing the possibility of trade unions for Africans in the No - Confidence debate, struck the same note. After mentioning the early difficulties associated with the unionisation of Afrikaner workers, he continued, how much more will the Bantu worker, with his different nature, not struggle to make use of this foreign bargaining machinery. The fact of the matter is that the nature of the Bantu is such that he is still to a very large extent susceptible to intimidatory pressure and intimidation, as our labour history amply demonstrates."

However, in spite of this racialism, there were also important indications of changing attitudes. first there here was the admission by several Government Speakers wages were in fact too low. While accepting this, they disputed that it was the Government's responsibility, arguing that there was no Legal ceiling on wages and that it was the employers rather than the Government who set the wages. They were of course quick to point out that Natal is a predominantly English-speaking province, and hence that most of the low-paying employers were presumably United Party supporters.

Perhaps the most significant factor was the portion of his speech in the No-Confidence debate which the Prime Minister devoted to the strikes. Firstly, unlike other Government speakers, he did not make any mention of agitators". Secondly, he said, "I want to say at once that the events there contain a lesson for us all we would be foolish if we did not all benefit from the lessons to be learned from that situation. It is most certainly my intention, as far as my responsibility extends, to benefit from them, Employers, whoever they may be, should not only see in their workers a unit producing for them so many hours of service a day. They should also

see them as human beings with souls (lol . 3 4 6 , 9/2/73) .Although the impact of this le s son does not show itself in the content of the speech made by other Governments' spokesmen it is evident in the haste with which the Minister of Labour ordered new Wage Board inquiries; it is evident in the amendments to the Bantu Labour Settlement of Disputes Act; a ; overall it is evident in the cool way in which the Government actually handled the situation. thus Government's reaction was very much a mixture of the old and the new. We shall return to an examination of the tensions of this ambiguous position when we have analysed other aspects of the debates.

There is a certain amount of similar tension also to be found in the speeches made by United Party spokesmen. Particularly into resting are their immediate reactions -to the strike situation itself. Mr. Cadman, the United Party leader in Natal, spoke on Tuesday, February, at the height of the strikes.

speech illustrates the latent white stereotype of mass African action. He reported to the House: "Certain of the strikers are not merely mischief-makers, but they have turned to loot the shops in the Umgeni Road and there have necessarily been baton charges Anyone with the slightest knowledge of that province will know that a great many of the shops in the Umgeni Road are Indian-owned shops, and that very beginning of any industrial strife in that province, which escalates into something far worse, is the looting of Indian shops by Zulus in that town " (Col . 164) . Of course, these allegations were not true, but they illustrate the reflexes of White Natal's who immediately associated a march by Black workers with violence and looting and anti-Indian actions. The next opposition speaker in the debate was Mr Vause Raw, another Natal M. P. After referring to other illegal strikes which had taken place in 1972 Mr. R aw continued: "whilst they create the impression that they do not care, I charge this Government with encouraging the strike in Natal by indicating that they are unconcerned, that they are not interested in taking any steps to stop it What sort of encouragement is it to those strike ¾s to say; the Government says it is not concerned with the strikes, it is not worried about them. So let us get on with it and do a bit more". Mr Raw's speech was continued on the following day Wednesday, 10 7. 7 February. He began

by refuting the Minister's claim that wages were not the main issue of the strike and he also pointed out that the Government did in fact have the power to introduce higher wage determinations. But he then went on to stress the illegality of the strikes, and although he admitted that it would not be practical to arrest 40 000 strikers, he asked: "What steps has the Government taken to get it across to the strikers that they are breaking the law of South Africa, and that whilst they are not being interfered with this is illegal, that this is an action against the authority of the State. Because once you have broken one law, Sir, you get the idea that you can break other laws, and this is a step along the road towards contempt for the law of the land " (Col . 187). While this was probably all true, it was scarcely the time to say it. Mr. Raw was criticising the one sensible element in the Government's response to the immediate situation: the fact that they realised that it was necessary for once to turn a blind eye to the letter of the law. What Mr. Raw expected them to do, short of mass arrests, is not at all clear, but whatever it was it would almost certainly only have exacerbated the situation.

Apart from these two contributions to the debate, the Opposition concentrated on two facts. Firstly they pointed out that the Government's wage determination machinery was hopelessly inadequate in principle, and not even properly utilised in fact. The Government could in fact have used the wage determination machinery to set higher wages. As we have seen, the Government concentrated on attacking the employers. · The Minister pointed out cogently: " A pattern which emerges from this strike in Durban is that employers who previously did not find higher wages possible have now suddenly found that they are " (Col. 566) To this, the Opposition replied that individuals who raised wages thereby price their goods out of the market, and it was necessary, therefore, for all wages in a particular branch of industry to be raised simultaneously.

This required some form of Government ntervention. The second main opposition argument was that the Government policy of job reservation coupled with the Government's failure to provide either basic education or the requisite industrial training were the root causes of the low wages. That is, they argued that low wages were the result of low productivity, which was the result of Government inaction.

Apart from the discussion of the causes of the strikes themselves, the discussion centred on two other related topics; whether Africans should be permitted to have the same trade union rights as other workers; and what was the cause of the "wage gap " between Black and White. Elements of all three of these debates overlap, but it is nevertheless useful to try to discuss the three themes separately. Government spokesmen advanced four main arguments against the idea that Africans should have the same trade union rights as other workers. Firstly, they argued that it was not in the interests of the White workers. Secondly, it was argued that giving Africans trade union rights similar to those of other workers would lead to undesirable race mixing. As Mr. J. M. Henning asked accusingly "The workers of South Africa want to know whether those people will be able to serve on trade union s' executives" (Col. 1043). Further on he argued that if these rights were allowed "it would lead to total integration, which would result in the ousting of the White workers. It would mean the end of the traditional policy in recognition of racial differences. I say it will eventually lead to one man one vote "' (Col. 10 46). Thirdly it was argued that African workers do not want unions and are not ready for unions, According to the Minister of Labour, "The majority of Bantu workers in this country are not asking for trade unions, as is apparent from the struggle that trade unions are having to survive" (Col. 1072). In the debate on the strike situation, Mr. M. W. de Wet made the statement, "Does the lesson we learn from Durban not make it clear to us that our Bantu are not yet ready for trade unions? " (Col. 547) . And in a later debate, Dr. P. Bodenstein claimed, "The Bantu are not equal to the task of realising and accepting the finer technical benefits of responsible trade unionism " (Col . 5539). Thus the belief in Black inferiority is an important factor in rationalising the refusal of trade union rights. The fourth and perhaps the most important argument is that African trade unions would be used for political ends. This time was developed by a number of different Government spokesmen in several different debates. After saying, "The history of Bantu trade unions is very well-known Mr. W. L. Vosloo went on to give an extraordinarily garbled and very debatable account of that history apparently with the intention of demonstrating how frequently the trade unions had developed political overtones (Col. 10 57) The Minister of Labour said that "On the basis of experience gained in which this country in the past, and the way in which

these were also applied as politician instruments, 7 is not· in the interest of South Africa that Bantu trade unions should be recognised " (Col. 1071).

As we have seen the Durban strikes were blamed on agitators with imprecise but unpleasant motives, and this theme was us in arguing against trade unions. According to Mr. J. M. Henning, "We have repeatedly given the reason why we are not prepared to recognise Bantu trade unions, we do not hesitate to say that there are elements which will misuse it and those Hon. Members know this just as well as I do. The doors will be opened to the same militant influences that we had just recently in Natal, which will enable them to get right into the trade unions and to control them in order to achieve their own aims and not to. act in the interests of the Bantu ", and he went on to refer to "elements which do not want to bargain and negotiate in the interests of the Bantu, but which want to negotiate in order to misuse the Bantu," and "want to use the Bantu and prey on them for their own net various ends" lCol. 8411 - 14) .

These reasons are con contradictory. If African workers do not want trade unions there does not seem to be much danger in giving them the choice. On the one hand, there is the expressed fear of unwilling African workers being dragooned" into Unions by "nefarious" forces, capable of manipulating their tribal innocence at will. On the other, there is the fear that African trade union rights would lead to the development of strong bargaining which would threaten the privileged economic position of White workers. As Mr. Henning said, "The Honourable member must tell us what effect this would have on White wages" (Col. 1044). Sometimes it is argued that Africans are politically content and that political "danger" comes from external manipulators whereas at other time s there seems to be a recognition that African workers might have their own political aims.

From the opposition benches, two different proposals were put forward concerning trade union rights. The Progressive Party member, Mrs. Suzman, moved a motion that the Industrial Conciliation Act be amended so as to place African workers on exactly the same footing as other workers so far as trade unions are concerned. The United Party suggested an intermediate from the opposition benches two different proposals were put forward con

Leningrad union rights.

The Progressive Party member, Mrs. Suzman , moved a motion that the Industrial Conciliation Act be amended so as to place African workers on exactly the same footing as other workers so far as trade unions are concerned. The United Party suggested an intermediate programme, summarised as follows by Mr. Marais Steyn, the chief spokesman on labour affairs: “We made it clear that we saw this problem and had to take it on three levels, firstly on the level of the sophisticated Native workerworker4, in which respect I mentioned the example of the Association of Journalists of South Africa, which has a trade union. Secondly, I said that we should try to satisfy and help our natives in their period of transition by offering them affiliated membership of existing trade unions; and thirdly I spoke about the tribal Native the un-urbanised Native, the man who still do es have his roots in the homelands, and said that we should accept the works committee system for him” (1. o l . 840 7). The major argument that he presented to justify the exclusion of migrant workers from trade unions was the following: “One of the reasons why the system of collective bargaining works is that in normal countries, both employer and management on the one side and the workers on the other side are dependent on (sic) their livelihood, their security in the life of the industries in which they are employed. When you have migrant workers, which is the policy of the government those workers who are migrants are not co completely dependent on the industries. They can, and not only temporarily but for a very long time, take refuge in the tribal organisation that exists and makes it possible for its members to live in this way they will find it possible to strike for much longer and to cause much more disruption than the sophisticated worker would do “ (Col. 10 51 - 5 2). He then went on to say in the. The second category of workers he placed only those workers who were doing the same jobs Indian, Coloured and White workers, where the rate for the job would apply to protect the White worker”(Col. 10 5 4) . Thus all unskilled workers, and perhaps many semi-skilled workers as well, whether urban or migrant would be excluded from trade unions. However, he did believe that the works committees, which should be retained for them should be grouped in larger regional or industrial organisations.

In her speech, Mrs. Suzman made four main criticisms of the work committee system She argued, firstly that works committees have no real bargaining power; secondly, that employees would not raise their wages unless their competitors were doing likewise, which meant that wage negotiations should take place on an industry basis rather than on plant basis; thirdly, that workers do not trust works committees; and finally that the low prevailing wage rates for Africans of itself demonstrated the inadequacy of the bargaining machinery available to them. After referring to the growing movement in favour of African trade union rights amongst various existing unions and employers ' associations, she went on to discuss some of the arguments put forward against such rights. She argued, firstly that "It is important for a member of the Government that deliberately killed off the existing Black trade unions twenty years ago to say now that Blacks are inexperienced in trade unionism. How do you start getting experience of Trade Unionism if, in fact, you are not given the right to join registered trade unions" (Col. 10 31) . She argued, that secondly, that Black union rights would not in fact damage the interests of white workers; thirdly that strikes take place whether there are unions or not, and so it is better if they are o organised rather than wild -cat; and fourthly: " If the Honorable Minister is worried about Africans using trade unions for political purpose, I want to point out that trade unions also prevent political d iso order because the history of the world has surely shown over the years that political disorder largely follows economic grievances. If those can be prevented via orderly trade unionism and via orderly negotiations for wage rates and for conditions of work, the chance of political disorder is less They are not greater as a result of trade unionism" (Col. 0 ' 10 38). Finally, she suggested that the change in the employment patterns accompanied by increased industrialisation would continuously strengthen the actual bargaining position of African workers: " the more he is drawn into our industrial structure as a semiskilled and as a skilled worker, the more irreplaceable he is and the greater power he will get to demand more rights" (Col. 1038).

Finally, she suggested that the change in the employment patterns accompanied by increased industrialisation would continuously strengthen the actual bargaining position of African workers:

" the more he is drawn into our industrial structure as a semi-skilled and as a skilled worker, the more irreplaceable he is and the greater power he will get to demand more rights" (Col. 10 3 6) • One element in the debate over trade unions is a difference of opinion over the actual nature of South African society, and this difference can be further illustrated by an analysis of the arguments used in the discussion of the nature and origins of the "wage gap", The two different standpoints are summed up in the following quotations. According to Mr. F. J. le Ro u x, speaking in the No-Confidence debate at the beginning of the session, "The Bantu in White South Africa are here solely to sell their labour in South Africa. In addition, the Government is helping the Bantu homelands to help themselves and if I think of everything that is being ploughed into the homelands by a small white population in South Africa, I stand amazed" (Col. 531). To this, a United Party spokesman, Mr. T. Hickman, replied: "As far as labour is concerned, the first point I wish to make is that the economic progress we have achieved in South Africa over 60, 70 and more years, is the combined product of both Whites and Nun-whites in South Africa" (Col . 5319). In the debate at the Committee stage of the Labour Vote in the Appropriation Bill, another United Party spokesman said: "The difference between that side of the house and this side is that we believe sincerely that the Bantu worker or the 00Non-white worker is an integral and permanent part of the Soμth African economy. We believe that he is making a major contribution to the overall welfare of South Africa. " (M. D. J . Marais, Col. 5534). However, this difference in opinion as to the nature of the society does not affect the fact that both parties believe that absolute priority should be given to the interests of White workers. For example, Mr. W. T. Webber, who was the first Opposition speaker in the debate, said: "I want to hasten right away to tell my Hon. friends on the other side of the house that I am not pleading this afternoon that the Non-white worker must take the place of the White workers" (Hansard Col, 543 8). What does differ is the perception as to how the Blacks will react to the wage gap and what measures will be necessary to ensure continued growth. The United Party argued that "We have discovered a situation where one of the largest sections of employment in this country has been considerably underpaid and completely neglected and has had its productivity wasted and its value wasted because there

has been no training and no communication and no interest and no concern" (Mr. H. Mill er Col. 5467). They attributed this to three main factors; lack of training facilities; job reservation, which limits the use of black skills; and migrant labour, which creates high labour turnover and simultaneously inhibits, the acquisition of skills. In consequence, the Opposition's main theme was that the wage gap is the result of low productivity and that the way to overcome the wage gap and at the same time ensure continued rapid growth, is to do away with these inhibiting factors. Mr. Marais Steyn pointed out that current estimates are that the total population in the year 2 0O0 will be about 50 million, of whom about 7 million will be White. However, such a population at the expected level of economic development will require about five million people in organisational and managerial roles and another six million in skilled and semi-skilled jobs. This means that the greater proportion of people in both these categories will have to be black if the economy is to continue to expand · (Colo 5449) The National Party's response to this can be divided into four main points Firstly, spokesmen asserted that the policy that the United Party advocate would harm the position of the White worker. Mr Wentzel said, "I should like to ask them whether they are in favour of mutual racial competition in South Africa. Does the United Party by the introduction of Black skilled labour in our industries want to create a greater labour supply, in this way to lower the wage structure in order to create greater profits for the industries?" (Col. 5500 -0 1). The Minister of Labour suggested that statutory job reservation, although it only covers 2, 9% of the labour force, is, in fact, vital to the whole system of informal job reservations that protects White workers. He argued that "the moment we (use Black workers) in a manner which undermines the feeling of security of the White worker, we can forget that the Government, or any other Government for that matter, will be able to allow this evolutionary the process to take a proper course" (Col. 5 55 3) °insecurity among White workers then it was to a considerable extent the product of National Party propaganda. She said: "I must say I think it is time that the Hon, the Minister opted a new psychological approach to the White workers of South Africa. In the position which he holds, which he holds, he as The Minister of Labour should set the

tone and should start disabusing those White workers who still have any lingering fears about losing their jobs or being replaced by Black men" (Col. 5490). Secondly, although there were some admissions that wages could be improved upon, it was argued that in general, the position of Black workers was quite satisfactory. In particular, several speakers pointed out that the incomes of Africans in South Africa compare favourably with the incomes of people in. underdeveloped countries. Mr. W.L. van der Merwe quoted figures sr. owing the industrial workers were paid far less in other countries in Africa. He stated: "It was not the Bantu workers so much who asked for and expressed a need for higher wages; this was done by people from outside, the agitators to whom I referred Dur Bantu workers are basically contented " (Col. 5507). To the. L.E.D. Win Chester responded: "I want to remind the Hon. member and other Hon. members on that side of the house that the workers in South Africa, Black 9 White, Pink and Yellow judge their standards by what they see around them. It is no use saying to the Black worker in Johannesburg that he earns Rl0 per week while in Ghana his counterpart is earning R2 per week. He judges his standard by what he sees around him and not by what happens in other parts of Africa which he has probably never heard of" (Col. 5510).

The third kind of argument put forward also derives in part from this. It was expressed in its crudest form in the following statement by Mr P. R. de Jager: "After all, we know the Bantu and we know that there are some of them who, if they harvest enough mealies to see them through another year, will not cultivate his (sic) land the following year. With all respect towards them, I want to say that if such a person gets more than he earns, he will do even less" (Col. 5486). Another spokesman Mr. W. J. C. Rossouw, expressed similar ideas: "I want to know whether the Whites in South Africa or the Whites in Africa are guilty of the fact that the Bantu, an inhabitant of South Africa, has leeway to make up. Are the Whites to blame for that? I am no authority on the Bible, but I assume that these people were probably created at approximately the same time by the Almighty. Why, then, do the Non-whites have leeway to make up? Have we ever asked ourselves that question? I believe that if he had done his duty from the time when the world was created,

then we would have found him here as an independent nation and then we would hot have come here" (Col.5536).

Mr. Rossouw did not make it very clear in what sense the inhabitants of South Africa were independent before the White occupation. Nevertheless, the general drift of his remarks and those of Mr. de Jager is clear. It is that the wage gap is 11.5. result of the inherent deficiencies of the African people, of the inherited superiority, cultural otherwise, of White people. The Africans are seen as a group outside of and different from the South African community, having very different motives, wants and capacities. Their relation to the South African economy is only incidental to them and their essential mode of life has not been changed by the relationship. It is this set of assumptions which distinguishes the ideological position of the National Party from that of the Opposition.

Fourthly, a certain number of economists argue against any radical increase in Black wages. It was argued that wage increases would encourage employers to rationalise their use of labour, thereby creating unemployment; that South Africa's competitiveness on the world market 'would be affected and that there would also be considerable price rises at home. What would be the implications if the workers in this industry had to receive drastic wage increases? I will tell you who will have to pay for it. Not the factory owner, but the consumer, you and I, will have to pay for it" (Col. 5509, Mr. W: L· van der Merwe). Finally, the Minister of Labour argued that in fact the labour needs of the economy were being met by the process of reclassification and re-organisation of jobs within the framework of job reservation. He referred to the process of "AII jobs fragmentation", whereby a process which. was bringing all the responsibility of one skilled worker was broken down into several sub-processes, each of which was allotted to a semi-skilled worker. He suggested that about one and a half million African workers were at present doing semi-skilled or operative work (Col. 5476). According to a United Party spokesman, Dr. G. f. Jacobs, "Probably less than 8% of our workers and completely "unskilled"

(Col. 4560), which seems to be consistent with the Minister's claim. Let us now attempt to summarise briefly the main agreements and differences between the two major parties. firstly, they both accept the primacy of the interests of White workers over Black workers However since they differ profoundly over the nature of the society, they differ as to how that primacy is to be maintained. The United Party believes that present policies, insofar as they almost entirely ignore the interests of Black workers are, in the long run, likely to lead to an unstable social situation which will not in fact be in the interests of the White workers. Secondly, both accept that a major cause of the wage gap is low productivity on the part of Black workers, (although at one point Mr. Marais Steyn does suggest that White employers may also be at fault in this regard) (Col. 5452).However, they. differ as to the reasons for this low productivity with the Government interpreting it as being caused by the "difference" between Black and White, while the Opposition blames it on Government policy. Thirdly, and this is a point which we have not yet referred to, both agree that the problem in the field of labour relations is one of "communication", and this is a theme which has been widely echoed in the press. That is it is suggested that strikes arise essentially because of a lack of mutual understanding between employer and worker, rather than because of a conflict of interest between the two. Where the two parties disagree is on how to improve this communication, and part of the disagreement here is related to the d disagreement over the nature and role of African workers. However, at the same time, both parties seem to be in some way aware that something more than communication is at stake, and that the relationship between worker and employer is also a relation involving power. This realisation is shown in the concern expressed by spokesmen for both parties for the possible political consequences of the situation. Mr. Winchester expressed this clearly for the United Party, "I am not asking what would happen if we do increase salaries, but I am asking what would happen if we do not increase salaries. If we do not, all the dangers to the internal security of the State will become something very real" (Col. 5 510). for Government spokesmen the political dimension is always seen in terms of "agitators", but it is clear that this expresses, if not awareness, then an uneasy fear, that

African workers may discover that they need to use power to improve their lot. This fear is expressed more clearly in the repeated National Party argument that giving the African Worker's Trade Union rights will adversely affect the interests of White workers. If it were merely a question of improving communications between employer and Black worker, there is no way in which this could harm the· interests of White workers. Only if there is a power relationship and a conflict of interest between the three groups, could giving the African s trade union rights and thereby hanging on to their power position, rather than merely, improving their ability to communicate, be disadvantageous to White workers.

However, neither of the two parties seem to have thought out the problems involved here on a theoretical level or at l East if they have, and neither seems to be willing to articulate their thoughts. This is why each merely asserts to the other that its policy is more in the interest of the White worker, without presenting any clear argument to justify the claim. Parliament was not treated only to a reiteration of old arguments. Sir De Villiers Graaf said: "No, as the Hon. the Prime Minister knows those strikes were virtually all illegal, yet so far as I know no steps were taken to prosecute either the strikers or those who organised the strikes. I think we all realise that a new era in industrial relations in South Africa has been rung in as a result of what has happened" (Hansard Col.4890}. In the debate on the second reading of the Bantu Labour Relations Regulations Amendment Bill, which, according to the Minister of Labour " brings the strike provision in respect of Bantu workers into line with the principles which apply to other workers in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act" (Col.m8395} the following interchange took place: The Minister of Transport (interjecting): "You have never advocated the right of the Bi3ntu to strike". Mr. S. J.M. Steyn: " I have just said that in this respect the Government has stolen a march on us. I concede that; I said that that only went to show how the facts of reality in South Africa were compelling people to take up standpoints which were unthinkable a year ago" .The Minister of Transport: "Precisely" (L:ol. 840 3} Outside Parliament, the whole problem of the wage gap was formulated very clearly in a remarkable

speech by the deputy Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr. J. C. Heunis. After having discussed some of the economic problems associated with rapid wage increases, such as the danger of inflation if productivity does not increase at the same time as wages and the danger of unemployment if higher wages lead to mechanisation, he went on to say: but the question of wages also has another side. Has the White South African not perhaps learnt to live too high? If one looks at the cost of the cars that many Whites drive round in, or of the houses in which many of them live, then one may well ask if it is wise to invest so much money in these things, if it is an efficient application of resources, even if the Whites have sometimes worked hard for it.

Managers of businesses which often are not financially very strong, receive salaries of R15,000 and more per year, while the wages of their Non-white employees hardly satisfy the minimum requirements. We must remember that the demonstration effect is strong and that it can lead to tension in the future. The White may even find that the best investment that he can make is the investment which guarantees a better future for the. Non-white, and maintains a healthy and happy community in South Africa". This is another of those " Standpoints which were unthinkable a year ago ".

B. The Black response

African workers have no political rights within the main South African parliamentary institutions. They do, however, have political rights within the so-called " Homelands", the rural areas reserved for African occupation. The homeland governments do not have any formal control over what happens to their citizens in the White-controlled urban areas. Although some of these governments had voiced general grievances, they had not previously become involved with urban areas. But in the course of the strikes the KwaZulu Government did become involved, even if only initially on a verbal level. Since then this involvement has become more frequent and more direct. In this way, the conflict over wages and conditions of work has become much more closely linked with the conflict over land which has

hitherto preoccupied the homeland leaders.

The first direct intervention in the course of a strike occurred in March 1973, at the Alusaf refinery at Richards Hay. Richard's Bay is itself a bone of contention between the Republic Government and KwaZulu. Situated on the coast of Zululand, and in the course of being developed as a major industrial centre and as a deep water harbour, Richard s Bay is ideally suited to become KwaZulu's dependent outlet to the world, and the basis for autonomous economic development. The KwaZulu Government has frequently repeated its obvious historical and moral claim to the town, but the Republican Government has equally frequently refused to consider the corporation of Richards bay into KwaZulu. When about 500 workers walked out at the aluminium smelter, one of their first acts was to call on the KwaZulu government to intervene on their behalf and to negotiate with management. KwaZulu immediately agreed, and the Councillor for Community Affairs, Mr. Marney Dladla, was delegated to address the workers and meet with management. Alusaf at first refused to accept this. "We are not prepared to listen to any KwaZulu leader. Richards Bay is not part of KwaZulu."

However, When Mr. Dladla arrived at the plant, he had a 90-minute meeting with the manager, Mr. Van Vuuren at which, she told a meeting of workers afterwards, he told Mr. van Vuuren that if the wage situation was not improved, the KwaZulu Government would have to consider the possibility of preventing Alusaf from re-cruising labour in KwaZulu, He said " This is now a challenge to prove whether Kwa Zulu is a government or not. If these people are employed by this firm without my approval, it would be clear that we are not a government at all " (HD M 31/3/ 73) He fully backed the strikers' demands and told them that if the situation in our time forced strikers to go to Jail they should do it. (DN 30/3/73). Then, with the full backing of his government, he issued instructions to his department that no Zulus from the Homelands should be released for work at Alusaf until wages were improved (Sun. Tribune l/ 4/73). Meanwhile, the dispute was threatening to escalat7 in to a major confrontation between the two governments. Speaking at a beetle meeting in Durban the Minister for Indian Affairs and Tourism, Senator Horwood, attacked the KwaZulu Government for intervening: "It is we, and not Buthelezi or Dladla that at will decide what

goes on there" (N M 31/3/73). On the following day, a company of soldiers was sent in to keep the plant running, but not apparently to take action in relation to the workers. Chief Buthelezi reacted very strongly to this use of the army to replace striking workers. He said " l want to warn that history has shown that problems cannot be solved by sabre rattling. It is extremely provocative to replace workers with soldiers and this has made the who l situation highly explosive. I hope the workers will not allow themselves to be intimidated by this action and will continue to voice their feelings without fear" (DN 30/3/ 73). The Minister of Bantu. The administration defended the action of sending in the troops and also indicated that he considered that KwaZulu did not have the right to intervene, However, the KwaZulu Government argued that by making all Zulus, whether they live in KwaZulu or in the White-controlled areas, into citizens of KwaZulu, the Republic Government was there by making the KwaZulu Government responsible for every Zulu in the country" (Sun. Tribune 1/3/73).

The confrontation ended inconclusively when the workers went back to work after accepting the R2 per week pay rise which they had been offered at the beginning of the dispute. Nevertheless, it led the Kwa Zulu Government to claim in clearest possible the right to intervene in labour disputes in the white-controlled areas. Furthermore, they started in the strongest terms that they would in the future use whatever powers they had over the movement of labour to back workers' demands.

Kwa Zulu spokesmen have made it clear both that they want full trade union rights and improved wages for Africans in South Africa, and that they are aware of the potential power of the African workers in the struggle for those rights. Mr. Dladla told a meeting of the Natal Employers As sociation' that his government wanted full trade union ·rights for its citizens within the framework of existing White trade unions. He said that he had no faith in the works committee system because it had been proved that management would always dismiss the more astute. Black people who became active in the works committee. (DN 28/3/73). In his policy speech to the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, Chief Buthelezi said that Africans II almost control the economy of this country" and that 60 000 Africans had shown up During the labour unrest, what unity can achieve" (N M.11/5/73). In his speech

in Durban, Mr. Dladla said “We need a change right now, and the time will come when my people will be forced to withdraw their labour, whether it be from the kitchen s or from the factory or from commerce. Not because we want to, but because the government has forced us to” (D N 23/ 5/73). Back to work after accepting the R2 per week pay rise which they had been offered at the beginning of the dispute. Nevertheless, it led the KwaZulu Government to claim in the clearest possible way the right to intervene in labour disputes in the white-c6ntrolled areas Furthermore, they started in the strongest terms that they would in future use whatever powers they had over the movement of labour to back workers’ demands. Kwa Zulu spokesmen have made it clear both that they want full trade union rights and improved wages for Africans in South Africa, and that they are aware of the potential power of the African workers in the struggle for those rights. Mr. Dladla told a meeting of the Natal Employers Association’ that the government wanted full trade union ·rights for its citizens within the framework of existing White trade unions. He said that he had no faith in the works committee system because it had been proved that management would always dismiss the more astute. Black people who became active in the works committee (DN 28/3/73) . In his policy speech to the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, Chief Buthelezi said that Africans II almost control the economy of this country” and that 60 000 Africans had shown during the labour unrest, what unity can achieve” (N M 11/5/73). In his speech in Durban, Mr. Dladla said “We need a change right now, and the time will come when my people will be forced to withdraw their labour, whether it be from the kitchens or from the factory or from commerce. Not because we want to, but because the government has forced us to”(DN 23/ 5/73).

It seems fair to say that the strikes played an important role in the developing political consciousness of Black South Africans. There is a growing sense of power and also, at least on the level of political parties and organisations, a growing sense of unity. It is probable that the strikes have contributed to this, by directing the attention of the Homeland leaders to the problems of the urban areas, where they have a clear common interest, and by providing an occasion for other Flack political organisations to show their solidarity with African

workers. The Labour Party, which has a majority of elected seats in the Coloured People's Representative Council have spoken out strongly in favour of a better deal for African workers and joined with the major Indian political organisation s, the Natal Indian Congress, and with the University of Natal Wages Commission, in presenting evidence calling for an R30 per week minimum at Wage Board hearings in Durban (D N 5/4/73) Let us now attempt to summarise the main effects of the strikes on the opinions of the various significant groups in South Africa:

1. Whites have become much more sensitive to the fact of Black poverty than they have ever been before.

2. What is, perhaps, more significant is that they have become a little more aware of the potential power of Black workers. One may say that Whites have become a little less confident, while Blacks have become a little more confident. The idea that some kind of watershed in the development of South African society has been reached is widespread, at least among political observers, even if not among the electorate.

3. The strikes have clearly pushed the Government a little further in the direction of having to make realistic plans for the urban African population. They have thereby been pushed a little further in the direction of having to admit that there is an urban African population, and this must eventually have repercussions on the legitimating the ideology of separate development.

4. The s trikes focussed international attention once more on South Africa, in a way which clearly embarrassed both the - government t and some of the electorate.

5. White opinion has become a little more favourable towards the granting of full trade union rights to African Workers. Also 1, as a result of point 4, it has become a little more

difficult for the Government to take repressive measures against African Unions, and a lot more difficult forfa reign firms to do so.

6. The general renaissance of Black political activity, of Black organisation and of Black self - confidece has been strengthened.

CHAPTER 5

Political Economy of Labour

We have described the strikes, discussed the immediate causes, analysed the way in which the situation was perceived by various groups, and considered some of the points raised in the debate about the strikes. We now need to attempt a more systematic analysis of the points raised in this debate in order to situate the Durban strikes within the context of South African society.

A strike is an attempt to use a certain kind of power in ' order to achieve certain economic ends. We thus have to ask two sets of questions:

1. What will be the economic consequences of raising wages?
The answer to this assumes the answer to the prior question: Why are wages low at present?

2. What are the power relationships in South African society?
In particular, under what circumstances are Black workers likely to use whatever power they do have what are their objectives like l y to be, and what are the con sequences of this likely to be for the society as a whole?
We shall see that a stud y of the economic questions leads directly into a consideration of power questions.

A. Productivity and Wages

Let us begin with the "Wage Gap". Why does it exist? What would be the economic consequences of attempting to close it? We have seen that the most usual way of accounting for the wage gap is with reference to the concept of "productivity". African workers are said to be, for racial-cultural or historical reasons, less productive than white workers. The difference in wages, therefore, reflects the difference in productivity or the difference in the economic worth of the different classes of workers. If this argument is correct, then the problem can be solved by the use of the various technical and economic measures to improve the productivity of the lowest paid workers, and by removing whatever legal impediments there may be in the way of doing this. There are two major problems with this kind of argument.

l. The suggested "productivity gap" does not account for the size of the wage gap, which is a present 5. 6: l in the manufacturing industry and 6.3: l in construction (see DA. Etheredge). In the gold mines, the gap of 1969 was an incredible 20. l as compared to 11. 7 : 1 in 1911 (Wilson (1) 46. It is worth quoting Wilson's comment on the relation between this increase in the wage gap and any change in the "productivity gap": "In 1957 the S. A, Mining and Engineering Journal pointed out that 1 Far too many South African artisans (White) cannot measure up to their counterparts in the major industrial countries Indeed, one of the barriers to the full development of the mines in the Orange Free State (opened up in the late 1940s) was the poor quality of the White miners. This suggests that the skill capacity of White employees at the bottom end of the ladder may have actually fallen over time. However, without more information than is yet available, it is impossible to determine whether the relative skill distribution within the two racial groups working in the mines altered over time or not. But in view of the developments in the training of Black workers which took. place after the second world war, it seems likely that the difference in skill between the average 1 "White and the ' average 'Black worker narrowed rather than widened over the period under consideration 11 (Page 61. Our explanatory notes in brackets) A new wage agreement

for ‘White miners announced on the 1st.

July also indicates something more than productivity is involved in the determination of wage rates. According to a Press-report “The South African mining industry 7 O0O white artisans are to be paid R100 more a month in return for allowing Africans to take over some of the jobs recently done by Whites. As from this month, the artisans will get a straight R50 a month pay increase and a R50 a month responsibility ‘allowance in recognition of ‘ their co-operation in the rationalisation of artisans ‘ work on the mines” (RD M 2/7/73). Although the rationalisation is going to improve the productivity of the Black miners, it is apparently the White miners who are going to be paid for it. It is evident that what is involved here is a difference of productivity. In addition to this discrepancy between the alleged productivity gap and the actual wage gap, Etheredge has pointed out that a recent study shows that Whites receive roughly three times as much as Blacks for doing the same job. If we try to interpret the White- Black wage gap as being a function of the skilled-unskilled gap, we find that the ratio of the wages of skilled to unskilled White workers is 1. 4: 1, which is roughly comparable with the skilled-unskilled ratio advanced industrial countries and quite incomparable with the 5: l White/Black ratio. Thus even if we accept that productivity and skill differences play a part in determining wage differentials, we are forced to admit that there are also other significant factors in volved in South Africa.

2. But there is a second, and perhaps even more damaging objection to the thesis that low productivity is the cause of low wages for Africans. If one considers, for example, two workers producing cotton fibre from raw cotton with identical spinning wheels, then it is possible to compare the “productivity” of the two workers by comparing the amount of thread that they have produced at the end of the day. But once one moves to a situation of a thousand workers in a mass production system using complex machinery, then it is no longer possible to compare the productivity of two individuals in two different factories. It is possible to compare the output per head of the two factories, but this is not the same as a comparison of the individual productivity, and hence worth, of the two workers. Output is determined by at least three factors:

l. The type of machinery used.
2. The organisation of the production.
3. The skill and energy of the workers.

Thus a difference in output per head may be a function of one of the factors over which the workers have no control. There is in fact considerable evidence that one of the most important factors in the relatively low level of output per head in South African factories is the inability of management to utilise labour effectively, rather than the inability of Blacks to acquire skills. Professor Hobart Houghton has 125. commented "The general management of African factory labour is slip-shod and inefficient in the extreme" Wilson (2) Page 177.There is, unfortunately, no comparative study of man engagement in South Africa and in other industrial countries but commentators have pointed out that a major weakness seems to lie in the failure to realise that, especially when the work itself is uninteresting, workers have to be motivated to work. The most obvious way to do this is through monetary incentives, but there are also a large number of other techniques of personnel management available for the purpose. A basic principle behind these techniques is simply that if workers are treated as people who matter to the firm, then they are likely to work harder. Etheredge elaborates on this as follows: " To motivate people you need to give them a sense of belonging, identification as individuals, permanent career opportunities with prospects of promotion, good salaries and benefits for sickness and retirement. This is rudimentary stuff, and hardly a firm does not provide these motivations for its White employees, but Blacks are not motivated and until they are we will not get higher productivity" (Etheredge, 18). That is, precisely, rudimentary stuff. We need to ask, there, fore, WHY such obvious and widely known principles of good management are so widely neglected in South Africa. Partly, of course, it is a function of ignorance and of cultural backwardness; of the fact that White managers are not immune to the racial prejudice that permeates the White culture in South Africa, and which prevents them from thinking rationally about their Black employees. For example, in a survey of the opinions and attitudes of the White elite in South Africa carried out in 1966 - 67, Heribert Adam found the following beliefs among the 206 entrepreneurs, located mainly

in Nata, whom he interviewed. 72% rejected the statement that "Between the White man and the Bantu there is no difference in ability the difference lies only in the opportunities provided". 72% believed that Africans have a "different skull formation and brain structures" from Whites, and 80% believed that they have different "hereditary character predispositions" (Adam Sociological Perspectives 8O - 82). Thus, in spite of the ready availability of facts to contradict these beliefs (See for example Tobias "The Meaning of Race" S. A. I. R. R. 1972), prejudice and ignorance continues to be widespread among the repeatedly most sophisticated members of the society.

B. Low Wages and Capital Accumulation

However, the fact of prejudice cannot be the whole answer, for if ignorance seriously threatens profit rates it could not hope to survive in a highly competitive business community. The fact is that in spite of the inadequate utilisation of labour, profit rates in South Africa are, in international terms, high. According to Biesheuvel, the average return on equities on the Jo Johannesburg Stock Exchange is a good deal higher than in New York, London and the Continent" (Biesheuvel: 16 - 17). Another index of the relative profitability of investment in South Africa is the fact that returns on U.S. investment in South Africa average 17%, which is far higher than the returns on U.S. investment in Australia and New Zealand, two countries with rather similar economies but with an all-White, and all-unionised, labour force. (see. Horner). The high rate of U.S. profit might be argued to originate in the fact that South African-owned firms offer only so ft co competition to the more efficient U. S. owned firms, but there is in fact little evidence that the management practice of U. S. firms in South Africa is any different from that of native firms. In any event, most of the managers are White South Africans. Thus it is probable that the U. S. profit figures do indicate an overall high level of profitability in South Africa.

This means that there is therefore no immediate and drastic pressure in South Africa obliging managers either to question their, prejudices or to go bankrupt. We need to ask, then, how it is that an economy

which apparently utilises one of its resources so badly, nevertheless manages not only to survive but actually to thrive. And the answer is simple. It is that until now at least, low wages for Blacks, even with the attendant bad effects, have been functional for the owners of South African industry. We need now to discover how this can be the case.

The first prerequisite for economic growth is that there, should be a regular surplus of goods produced over and above what is for immediate consumption. This surplus can be reinvested. Growth, therefore, implies saving, and our first question must be; Who does the saving? Discussing 19th. Century Europe, Spandau, paraphrasing Keynes, points out that the economy "was so organised that increased income was put into the control of the class least likely to consume it" and that this, therefore, made for rapid growth (Spandau Pg.3.). From this perspective we can conceive of two "ideal types" of accumulation. On the one hand, there is the individual who works hard himself, but instead of using his greater income to live better, saves and invests it. He accumulates by depressing his own standards of living. On the other hand, there is the individual who employs workers and accumulates by depressing their standard of living, by paying low wages, while himself continuing to consume at a relatively high level. We may distinguish, therefore, between saving through voluntary austerity and saving through enforced austerity. Enforced austerity on the part of some class or other does not necessarily lead to accumulation; it can lead to conspicuous consumption along the lines of Louis X l V's Versailles. Spandau's point is that in 19th. In Century Europe there was a combination of a system of enforced austerity by the workers, which ensured that they would produce an economic surplus and an owning class which "Preferred the po1r.er which investment gave it to the pleasures of immediate consumption" - (Page 3). (Although one should add that their level of consumption remained comfortably high in relation to that of the working class) . The relation between savings and consumption raises a second problem. Investment can only be profitably undertaken if there is a market available for the products of the investment. That is investment pre-supposes consumption, as well as saving. But the more we save the less we consume, so if we save

too much, either through our own austerity or through the enforced austerity of whose whom we employ, then we will have trouble disposing of the goods which we have produced. Spandau distinguishes between two schools of thought in regard to this problem: "belt-tighteners" and "market-expanders" "Bel t-tighteners believe that the production of consumer goods and the accumulation of investment capital are mutually exclusive activities, whereas, "market-expanders" argue that the two activities must go hand in hand" (Spandau Page 3). The argument between these two schools of thought is very important for an understanding of the role of wages in the South African economy. The market expanders' position would be this: Low wages - enforced austerity for the Black workers - resulting in a small local market, which is non-functional for the economy as a whole and slows down eco no mic growth, to everybody's detriment. The belt tighteners, on the other hand, argue that enforced austerity for Black workers has been, and so, therefore, perhaps still is, a necessary prerequisite for the accumulation of surplus end so for growth.

It may also be, of course, that we are moving from a period of "belt-tightening" into a period in which the size of the market becomes the problem. Nine-teenth Century Europe certainly managed to grow in spite of a very high rate of savings, but this was, interalia because of the important role played by export markets. In considering the South African case, we need to ask: (a) How precisely have wage levels been related to investment levels?

(b) Where have South African producers found their markets? Spandau attempts to resolve the first question by asking what factorial ultimately restricted growth in the periods of rapid economic growth that South Africa has known in this century. Was it a shortage of capital, or was it their insult of saturation of the available markets? His answer is that it was in fact a shortage of capital which inhibited growth: " For the secondary sector it appears that investment (and hence, potential growth} is a function of retained earnings, the accumulation of which stands in direct competition with money paid out in the wage bill. In periods of financial stringency, it is the Non-whites who, by virtue

of their weaker bargaining power, have to bear the run of financial capital accumulation. This is reflected in the widening of racial wage differentials during periods of rapid growth" (Spandau page 18).
Before going on to consider this problem further, we need to look at the second question: Where exactly do South African producers find their markets in answering this question we need to distinguish between producers of raw materials for export and producers of foodstuff and manufactured goods for local consumption. Producers of raw materials are to a great extent dependent on the export market. This means that the internal level of demand, and hence the internal wage level, is not of great significance for them. Wages are important not in so far as they affect the level of demand but in so far as they affect the costs of production and the re by affecting the competitivity of the goods on the world market. What is important, obviously, is that wages should be kept down, not up. For example, in the gold mine s it has frequently been argued that the profitability of many of the mines depends almost exclusively on the availability of an abundant supply of "cheap native labour". The following quotation from the report of the Witwatersrand Mine Native Wages Commission.

(U. G. 21/1944) illustrates this fact, and its consequences for the development of industry in South Africa. "The gold mining industry of the Witwatersrand has indeed been fortunate in securing for its unskilled labour, active peasants who have been willing to come to the Witwatersrand for periods of labour at comparatively low rates of pay. But for this fortunate circumstance, the industry could never have reached the present stage of development some mines would never have opened up, many low-grade mines would have been unable to work with any prospect of profit; in the case of the richer mines, large bodies or ore, the milling of which has been brought within the limits of playability, could never have been worked, with the result that the lives of the mines would have been considerably reduced. "That the results accruing from this cheap native labour supply have had a profoundly beneficial effect on the general economic development of the Union is a matter that needs no demonstration. Not only has the earth yielded up a great body of wealth which would have remained unexploited,

but vast amounts of money have been paid away in wages and put into circulation for the acquiring of equipment and stores necessary for the working of the mines and this, in turn, has had a beneficial effect upon the development to secondary industries" (quote. in Horwitz p. 338). (Whether, as the report states, it was merely a matter of "good fortune", is a question that we shall have to examine further). Wilson argues that more efficient use of labour. would have enabled the mines to remain profitable, and at the same time pay higher wages, and this may well be the case. But the point that we wish to make here is that the mining industry was in fact able to combine profitability with low wages and that there was no economic necessity for them to improve their management practices. There were also important political obstacles in the way of doing so.

For secondary industry, the export market is not so important, although it is not negligible and there are probably some firms which are directly dependent on exports. Furthermore, part of the engineering industry produces for the mines and thus is directly dependent on the export market. But, on the whole, the secondary industry produces for the internal market. In terms of Spandau's mode, it may be argued that the reason why the size of the internal market has not been a limiting. The factor is that enforced austerity has not been applied to all workers. Rather, it has been confined to Black workers while the rapidly rising incomes of White workers have provided a sufficiently large market for the secondary industry. That is, the enforced austerity of Black workers has not only provided savings for the accumulation of capital, but has at the same time subsidised the level of consumption of the White workers and especially of the White middle-classes who are far more overpaid than are White manual workers.

The Creation of a Labour Supply

We are now faced with two further questions, which take us out of the realm of purely economic analysis and into the sphere of politics. How is it that the owners are able to enforce austerity on their workers? How is it that the White workers have been able to escape from this

situation of enforced austerity? On the whole, when people have the resources necessary to enable them to work for themselve's they do not work for other people. When there is still unused and unclaimed land available in a country, people do not begin to work for other people, unless of course they are physically compelled to do so. In the early development of North America by colonists, it was, therefore, necessary to acquire unfree labour, either through slavery or through some form of indentured labour system. Only those who have no direct access to the means of production are dependent on those who control the means of production for their livelihood. One can approach this fact from two different angles. One may say, as an African priest said to one of our interviewers "The Capitalists provide work for my people, and we should be grateful for it". But one canal so ask: "How is it that some people appear to be able to monopolise the productive resources of a country in such a way as co be able to oblige other people to work for them?"

In our discussion of the bate in parliament we have already seen one of the ways in which this question has traditionally been answered in South Africa: According to this argument, the White settlers came into a relatively unpopulated land. They settled in it and developed it in such a way that their African neighbours were attracted to it to work. The land and the mineral wealth, therefore, were acquired by the right of prior occupation. African workers come to work in the White areas because of what these areas have to offer them, not because they are in any way obliged to do so. Moreover, they remain an essentially distinct community with needs which are determined by the traditional subsistence level. The low wage structure is a result of this and of the fact that not being dependent for their subsistence on the industrial system, they are "target workers", who will return to their homelands as soon as they have earned enough money to satisfy some particular need: hence the belief that if they are paid more , they will work less. Whites are not, in any way responsible for whatever conditions might lead Africans to leave their homelands in order to seek work in the white-controlled areas. Rather, there is a situation of mutual need, mutually satisfied. Further, this implies that the needs and interests of

African workers are such that they are not likely voluntarily to engage in political or social activity in white-controlled areas. Therefore, any analysis of South African society which considers it as one society in which there are structural tensions between various groups is radically mistaken.

We believe that it is of the greatest importance for anybody wishing to understand not only the strikes but also the likely future development of South African society, to realise that the above view has no historical foundation and is based on a failure to understand the dynamics of social development. South Africa is one society, and the African worker is as different from his pre-colonial tribal ancestor as is the Afrikaans businessman from his trekboer ancestor. We do not make this point simply out of a concern for historical accuracy, but rather because history persists into the present in the form of a social structure that institutionalises certain kinds of relationships between groups, and if we do not see the historical roots of these relationships we tend to stagger back in stunned surprise, muttering about agitators, when these relationships suddenly exhibit themselves in the raw in strikes. We feel that it is important, therefore, to spend a little time looking at the historical process which has produced the present distribution of resources in South Africa.

When the Whites first arrived in South Africa, there was not a corner of the land which did not form part of a system of tribal occupation. The areas now known as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had, as we know from archaeological evidence, been occupied by Bantu-speaking tribes for centuries and the coastal areas of Natal and the Transkei were inhabited by the Nguni at least a hundred years before 1652. Furthermore, west of the Bantu-speaking tribes, extending as far as the Cape, there was a relatively abundant population of Khoisan and San people, estimated at about 200 000 in 1652 (See Wilson and Thompson: Oxford History of South Africa Vol.1 Chapters 2, 3 and 4). All of South Africa was either in use by a tribe, part of a tribe's hunting grounds or as a buffer zone between tribes. In this situation, the White settlement could hardly be entirely peaceful, nor could it

proceed without dislocating the economies of traditional societies and displacing large numbers of people. We shall not try to give even a general account of this whole process, but it will be useful to describe it very briefly as it happened in Natal. Of utmost significance is the fact that there has always been a very close relationship between the question of land and the question of labour. This is because in the early days land was the sole means of production, and so he who controlled the land also controlled the labour supply. Thus in the process of land alienation that began with the first White settlement in Natal, there were always two interlinked motives: the acquisition of land for White use, and the limitation of land available for Blacks, in order to oblige them to work for Whites. As is well-known, the initial White occupation in Natal was enormously facilitated by a historical accident. The period in which the Voortrekkers first crossed the Drakensberg into Natal, coincided with the aftermath of the most devastating series of wars in the known history of settlement in Southern Africa, known collectively as the "Mfecane" Before 181 2, the area of Natal south of the Tugela was occupied by 94 tribes, with an estimated population of 100 000 people.

However, north of the Tugela, partly owing to the increasing pressure of population, and partly owing to the struggle between competing groups for the control of the lucrative ivory trade through Delgoa Bay, there arose a powerful militaristic kingdom. _ In the following 20 years the wars of the Zulu kingdom had the effect of virtually depopulating Natal, so that in 1838 when the Voortrekkers were beginning to move into the region, the population has shrunk to perhaps 10 000. However, the others had not all been killed. In fact, many, if not most of them, had merely fled temporarily to safer places or had been press-ganged into the Zulu army, and were awaiting the restoration of peace in order to return home. This the apparently uninhabited ed areas into which the Hoers we removing, were claimed both the by Zulus kingdom, and also by the many thousands of tribesmen who had recently fled. By 1847, when the Boers had defeated the forces of Dingane, there were once more an estimated 100 00 Africans between the Tugela and the Mzimkhulu. But by then of the 12m acres of usable land, only rivers. had the million was available to the Africans. The rest either become

the property of the White settlers or had become crown land. The Africans were scattered red in locations throughout Natal. The Whites who had acquired vast 3 000 Morgan farms, needed labourers to work them and were soon complaining that the Africans had too much land. A commission, comps essentially of colonists, reported in 1845 that "Ital 'fatal error to set aside so much land for Kaffirs. ' immense locations' dried up the source whence an abundant and continuous supply of Kafir labour for wags might have been procured and allowed Kafirs to follow idle, wandering and pastoral habits" (Quoted in Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. 1 paraphrasing by Professor Wilson).

Apart from recommending that the locations be broken up, the Commission also suggested an increase in the hit tax as a further device for forcing African s to take paid employment. The hut tax had first been imposed in 1849, and throughout the 19th · Century taxation of this sort was used specifically as a device for acquiring labour for White employees. As the Natal Minister of Native Affairs said in a speech in the Legislative Assembly in 190 5, "for the last twenty years to my own knowledge, the inhabitants of this colony have asked for an increase in taxation, generally upon the native inhabitants of this colony as far as their wants are concerned, and for what? The cry has been for labour, and until you increase the natives ' wants, so long will you be without labour" (Quoted in Shula Marks: Reluctant Rebellion). The continued land and labour hunger for White settlers. was a major factor leading to further conflict with the still independent Zulu kingdom north of the Tugela. This conflict was rarely if ever simply a straight fight between settlers and Africans. The Nguni social structure had two features which rendered it unstable and enormously facilitated settler success. Each tribe was ruled by a chief, but any large tribe was usually subdivided into territorial segments each ruled over by relatives of the chief. Furthermore, the chief was not his "Great Wife" whom he might well have married late. Thus the crown prince was often very young when the chief died and equally often surrounded by jealous elder brothers, some of the territorial segments. Under these circumstances succession disputes were endemic, and it was often through skilful manipulation of these disputes that the vastly outnumbered white

settlers were able to gain increasing power over large and larger areas. The defeat of Dingane by the Trekkers in 1839 was an example of this, since an important factor in it was the conflict between Dingane and his brother Mpande, who was supported by and in turn, supported the Boers. After Dingane's defeat, the Boers, and the British, were left in control of the area south of the Tugela, while Mpande and his successors retained their independence in Zululand, with the Tugela as the recognised border. However, the northern border of Zululand was not so clearly demarcated, and there were continuous infiltrations from that direction by land-hungry Transvalers, leading to continued friction from Zulus and the Transvaal. At the first the British High Commissioner, Sir Bartle Frere, decided that it was necessary to break the military power of independence Zululand. Using a variety of pretexts, he issued a totally unacceptable ultimatum to Cetshwayo, and, when it was rejected, declared war. (See Brooks and Web "A History of Natal" Chapter 13).

After the Zulus had been defeated by the Imperial army, some disputed areas of the Zulu territory were ceded to the Transvaal. The Zulu state and army were entirely dismantled, and in their place were left thirteen small chieftainships. In the absence of any strong central authority, there was plenty of room for outside interference in dynastic quarrels. Cetshwayo was first deposed and deported, and then as the situation within Zululand became more and more disturbed, was returned, but with power over only part of his previous domains. The ensuing led to Boer intervention on the side of Cetshwayo's successor, Dinizulu. Dinizulu was restored to his throne, but at the cost of submitting to a Boer Protectorate, and accepting the expropriation of about 4 000 square miles of territory, about one-third of the entire area. The protectorate was shortly replaced by British control, but most of the expropriated area was recognised as a Boer settlement, the New Republic.

This, however, was not the end of white settler encroachment on Zulu Lands. In 1893 Natal received "Responsible Government" which meant that British imperial rule was replaced by a white settler government.

Zulu lands itself remained a British Protectorate, but four years later, after considerable settler agitation, it was annexed to Natal. One of the main objectives of this was that the more fertile areas could be opened up to white settlements. A commission was set up, which demarcate about 2,5 million of the 6,5 million acres for white settlement.

Thus by a series of military and "diplomatic" moves, carried out over more than half a century by three different groups, Boers colonists, Natal Colonists and British Imperial Government, the African land holdings in Natal had been reduced to a fraction of their original extant.Those Africans who lived in the expropriated areas found themselves to be considered squatters or tenants on the lands of white land owners, providing a ready-made labour force. Inevitably, also, the lands with which the Zulus were left were among the least fertile. As a result, by the end of the century the "Labour shortage", which had led to the importation of indentured Indians to work on the coastal sugar plantations, was much less serious, though it was still thought necessary to impose a new tax in 1905 in order, inter alia, to encourage the flow of workers.

In making this analysis we do not wish to judge the morality of the various participants. However, we do wish to point out that this process created certain structural relationships between groups in South Africa, and that these structural relationships between groups in South Africa, and that these structural relationships persist in the present and are an important factor in determining the relation between the groups today. The conquest described above was not created the labour force and created it in such a way that it was possible to adopt a policy of enforced austerity in which the worker has no choice but to work at a low level of wages. The fact that the land-holding of Africans were limited in such a way that they could no longer even survive at their traditional level of subsistence meant that this was precisely the situation facing African workers. But the consequence of the fact that the labour force was created largely in a non-voluntary way was that it became necessary to introduce certain measures to control it. We have already considered some of this legislation, and we may note that

the essential element in the legislation is that it maintains the workers in a condition of powerlessness. They are not in a position to organise and use the power that comes from organisation in order to force the employers to improve their wages. The labour laws in South Africa are designed to control the movement of African workers (The Pass Laws) , to control them at their place of work (The Master and Servants Act), and to prevent them organising.

This account can help us to understand both the very low level of African wages, and the gap between African wages, and the gap between African wages and white wages. The business leaders we interviewed ascribed the low wages to "market" forces", the law of supply and demand, and in a sense this is correct. The individual business can play low wages because there is a surplus of people demanding jobs. But this does not mean that the low wages to "market forces", the law of supply and demand, in a sense is correct. The individual business can pay low wages because there is a surplus of people demanding jobs. But this does not mean the low wages are the result of some inexorable economic law, and therefore cannot be changed. The "market" always operates within politically defined parameters. In South Africa, those parameters are the land shortage in the rural areas and the absence of trade union rights in the rural areas. These are both politically created facts. The land shortage in the reserves, and the resultant low productivity in the agricultural sector, which obliges workers to accept low wages in order to survive, is the creation of the process of conquest which we have describes; in the so-called "anti-squatter" measures embodied in the 1913 Bantu Native Land Act; and of the fact that the state has consistently spent large sums of money on improving agriculture in white-controlled areas, but has spent relatively little in the African controlled areas (Horwitz 136) (See also G. Arrighi for an account of a similar process in Rhodesia). These political acts created the labour force. The systems of control imposed the sides in the market situation. It is only within this context that the market imposes low wages. This means that we may not view the wages as being the result of impersonal forces, and hence beyond the control or the responsibility of either the Government of the employers.
Black and white workers entered the labour market on very different terms.

Even the most ill - qualified white, with no technical training, and without the habits of industrial and urban society, was nevertheless a member of the politically dominant group and was therefore in a position to use political power against his fellow Black workers. Labour legislation in South Africa has been designed very largely to protect white workers and to permit them to share with employers in the fruits of development: "For too long South African labour laws were regarded as progressive and adequate to cope with labour problems, while in effect they only coped with the problems, while in effect they only coped with the labour problems, while in effect they only coped with the problems of those dominating the labour market" (W.H. Thomas: 13).

The consequence of this, and it is a serious one, is that wage levels for both Black and White are, from an economic point of view, very distorted. As Thomas comments elsewhere in his paper, "Without even having to go into much empirical research, it is obvious that white pay levels are quite inflated, compared with work productivity and pay levels in other equivalent countries" (Page 4). This is the reason why the policy of the "rate for the job", in so far as it means "the white rate for the job" is no solution to the problem of the wage gap. The white rate is not an economic rate at all., and it would be a "white" wage curve as it exists at the moment (See Figure 1).

Far from being a progressive policy, the "rate for the job" is in fact a policy designed to entrench the position of white workers, by perpetuating the vast gap between the wages of an elite of skilled workers and the wage of the mass of semi-skilled workers. The fact that a few Africans might be accepted into the elite would not radically alter the position of the bulk of African workers.

This might only constitute a moral problem if it were likely that the present system of control could be easily and indefinitely maintained. But, as the strikes indicate, this can no longer be considered to be likely. We can understand why if we analyse critically the second fatal flaw in the in the idyllic model of South Africa society which we hypothetically sketched earlier.

Wage Curves black & White

Rand Per Month			
400			
300			
100			
0			
Unskilled	Skilled	Semi Skilled	Tech/Super

There are two curves, entirely separate, and not meeting at a point. The dotted stretching up sharply from the Black curve reps represent the move towards rate for the job and higher wages for Blacks in more responsible positions, but the continuing solid curve which is very much flatter, is more representative of the wages of the majority of higher " level Black jobs".

The assumption underlying the model is that Africans do have not 139. been affected in any important way by their interaction with the dominant group. But in fact not only has the process of contact made it impossible for them to survive tribally at the accustomed level, but it has also shifted them into quite a different kind of society which generates quite different kinds of needs in its members. White South Africans have been so blinded by racial thinking that they have lost the ability to think historically and sociologically. They fail to remember that 18th. Century Europe and the 19th Century Boer Republic were very largely subsistence societies, in which grandfather and grand-son had the same kind of needs and those needs were almost unbelievably exiguous in comparison with the needs of their present-day successors. No White worked a day is going to refrain from demanding a wage increase because he is told that his great-grandfather goes by on much less, or for that matter if he is told that he is much better off than he would be if he were in Greece or Portugal. The same naturally applies to Black workers, and to understand why we need to look at the social impact of industrialisation.

In "Work and Authority in Industry", a comparative study of industrialisation in Britain, the United States of America, and Russia, Rein hard Bendix makes a number of points which can be used to illuminate the same process as it occurred in South Africa. In his concluding summary, he writes: "Industrialisation in its early phase poses a very general problem. It is accompanied by the creation of a non- agricultural workforce which is usually forced to bear the consequences of great social and economic dislocations. These dislocations terminate the traditional subordination of the "Lower Classes in the pre-industrial society. Though his development varies considerably with the relative speed and with the social setting of industrialisation, its result is that the "lower classes" are deprived of their recognised, if subordinate, place in society. A major problem facing all societies undergoing industrialisation is the civic reintegrate of the newly created industrial workforce" (Page 434). That is, over a long period of time in relatively stable agricultural societies out of which industrial societies eventually emerge, there arises a mutual acceptance by the ruling

class and ruling class of certain rights and duties. Within that context the "lower classes" accept the authority of their rulers. However, the process of industrialisation, by breaking down the traditional context of authority, destroys the acceptance of that authority. The new authority of the industrialist over his workers is no longer legitimated by tradition, and it can only be legitimated once the working class is once more integrated into the social order in a way which it accepts. This process proved to be difficult and conflict- was hidden in the societies which Bendix studies, but it is even more difficult in societies such as South Africa, where the industrial class relationships arise not by some sort of evolution from pre-existing societies but through a process of conquest. In these circumstances "no political economic community existed between employers and native labourers" (Page 445). This makes it much more difficult for the employer to legitimise his authority.

In order to understand what is meant here by the concept of legitimation, we can ask ourselves a question which is doubtfulness often asked by workers: "Why should I work for this man when he is not looking?" The answer must be that I will only decide that I should work for him if I believe that my work is a fair exchange for what he is offering me, and I will only believe this if I accept the legitimacy of the system which leads to me working for him, rather than him working for me. That is, in order for me to feel that 'I OUGHT' to work hard, I must recognise firstly, my employer's right to be an employer, and secondly, the justice of the way in which he treats me in so far as he is an employer. Now the judgements are not made with reference to some ideal norms of right and justice; they are made with reference to a socially accepted norm. In Europe, the norms of authority which lead the peasant, within limits, to accept the authority of the Lord were destroyed by industrialisation. In South Africa, these norms never existed. The African worker was brought into the industrial system by various methods of coercion which he was not likely to recognise as legitimate.

This lack of legitimacy has certain consequences which Bendix observed in all three societies under consideration and which canal so be observed in South Africa. On the one hand, the employer assumes

an absolute right of control within the enterprise, and also expects the worker to recognise it. When the worker does not do so and does not work unless he or she is actually being watched, the employer judges in moral enteritis. describing enterprises in Russia in the 18th Century, Bendix writes. “The agents and owners who managed these enterprises exercised their power over the serfs and 141 .free labourers on the assumption that nothing but ill-will and laziness could be expected of them. Work, they believed, was the result of fear, and punishments must be cruel and frequent; or else fear, and hence the stimulus of labour, would diminish” (Page 163) A similar stereo type was current in England ,where the gr eat 19th Century economist Mal thus described workers as “inert, sluggish and averse from labour”, and in the United States, where “ endless reiteration had confirmed the belief that workers were poor out of the evil purpose of their hearts; hence, poverty was a . moral problem and a proper subject of moral exhortation” (Page 289).

It is obvious that this attitude is still dominant amongst South African employers. We have already documented the extent to which both South African employers and foreign investors have this negative stereotype of African workers; whom they see in precisely the way in which 19th Century English, Russian or United States employers saw’ their workers. Also, it is evident that employers in South Africa today assume a kind of absolute authority over their African workers which would be quite out of the question for employers in advanced capitalist countries. This assumption is expressed very clearly in a document that the Durban Chamber of Commerce circulated to all its members during the strikes. It advises on action to be taken in the case of stoppage and the recommendations include the following items: “4. If you consider that your present rates of pay are fully justifiable stand by these and in no circumstances move from that stands if you feel that an increase in minimum wages is necessary determine this increase and tell them of your decision. Thereafter stand by your decision. 6. Do not attempt to bargain as this will only encourage the Bantu to escalate his demands. Action must be positive, definite and final”.

The basic assumption underlying this is that the employer has the absolute right to set wage rates (and other conditions) and that what he says goes, positively, definitely and finally. The workers may not be negotiated with, and therefore many have no say whatsoever in the setting of wages, inter alia because as the point implies, they cannot be trusted to do so. One of ‘ the employers who m we interviewed expressed this very clearly, though perhaps more crudely than most would do: “It should be like in the army management orders and labour obeys”. Having drawn the parallel, it is also necessary to analyse further the reality which underlies the stereotype. As we have seen, the Europe peasants and, a fortiori, the African tribesmen, found themselves dragged into a situation which they did not like and placed in a position of subordination to an authority whose legitimacy they did not recognise. Their reaction was, somewhat naturally to do only what they absolutely had to do. Bendix described the reasons for the early resistance to factory employment in England as follows: “Too many, poverty at home appeared preferable to the risks of life elsewhere. A customary way of life in which needs were limited often prompted men to respond to economic pressure by limitation g consumption rather than by seeking opportunities in other localities. And the attraction of economic opportunities was diminished under conditions where more work would be done when wages were lower and less when they were high. Indeed, many of the early entrepreneurs insisted that the cost of provisions be kept high, for in their opinion the people would increase their exertions only under such pressure. Thus despite the growth of population the mobilisation of labour was impeded by a customary way of life, in which work was subordinated to social rather than to economic considerations” (Pages 3 5 - 3 6).

Workers, therefore, resisted the factory, and this resistance was compounded by the difference between the work habits required in a factory and the work habits re choired in agriculture. In agriculture “The routine of their work entailed an unwitting adaption to a variety of tasks and to an irregularity of performance which was incompatible with the specialisation and machine-driven regularity of the factory “ (Page 38). Behaviour which was, from the workers ‘ perspective,

intelligently adapted to the unpleasant situation which they had to face, was interpreted by the employers as being the result of various mental and moral deficiencies on the workers 'art. Thus throughout this period, one had pseudo-philosophical and pseudo-anthropological theories advanced to explain the division of humankind into elite and masses. in South Africa, these theories inevitably were formulated in racial terms. Thus racialism of the Whites is, at least in par, the result of their misinterpretation of the reaction of Black workers to the process of industrialisation. But, because it is expressed in racial terms, it has proved much more long-lived than its European equivalents ad functions in such a way as to magnify White misperceptions of a continually changing reality. It also serves to some extent as a self-fulfilling prophecy. In Europe and the United States, the negative stereotype of the workers has declined because the workers have been to a certain extent grated into a new social order and there has grown up a common frame of reference in terms of which employers and workers come to recognise at least a limited legitimacy to each other. But in South Africa, this has not happened. African workers are still essentially excluded from society, and therefore to a considerable extent still refuse to recognise the legitimacy of their employers, Thus they still tend to practice what Veblen described as a "conscientious withdrawal of efficiency", which is the only weapon which remains to the rightless worker. The question of productivity is linked to the question of legitimacy , which in turn is reacted to the extent to which the worker is socially integrated.

In his study of African workers in New Brighton, " Swartman Stad en Toekoms", Du Rand gives a vivid picture of the way the lack of integration affects workers. He says that although there was relatively low job mobility among the 150 workers whom he interviewed, nevertheless only 15% of them were in their present jobs because they liked them, " The rest all indicated to a lesser or greater degree that in their case there was not really "choice of employment", but that conditions especially the need to obtain employment as soon as possible in order not to lose the right of residence in the city and the fact that attractive employment was, in any case, scarce, forced the m

into it, so to speak" (Pages 45 - 46). He speaks of the general distrust which they evince for the work situation and for the city as a whole. In spite of this negative attitude, under 30% of his sample still, identify fully with the rural areas. They, therefore, feel themselves necessity trapped in an urban environment which is hostile to them. But it is not the technological work situation in the city to which they are opposed, Du Rand found that they tended to value technology positively. Thus what is involved is not a rejection of industrial culture, but the experience of lack of integration into that culture.

Although therefore, African workers are still not "civically re-integrated" into a capitalist industrial society, they have been marked by it in important ways. This is particularly true of patterns of consumption, The African workers who came from the " Reserves" to work on White-owned farms or down, White owned mines in the 19th Century were target workers who went back home as soon as they had earned enough to pay their tax or to buy a blanket or a gun. But as new possibilities of consumption are opened up, so do new wants become important, and when this is linked with the fact that the old style of low-consumption communal life is becoming economically impossible, this means that there is a continuing process of generation of wants. This has characterised all people moving into industrialised societies and Africans in South Africa is not likely to prove to be any e exception. The pattern of demands in the strikes was of great significance. It was not only the worst-paid workers who went on strike, and in our interviews with African workers after the strike, those earning relatively good wages exhibited as much dissatisfaction as those earning very poor wages. As Deputy Minister Heunis pointed out, we must not neglect the demonstration effect: the wage gap itself, and not only the absolute level of poverty, is an important factor, and pehaps the important factor in producing African discontent. Many studies elsewhere have confirmed that what leads to social unrest is not absolute deprivation, but relative deprivation (T, R. Gur: Chapter 2), which is the difference between what you are getting and what you think you should be getting, and which is likely to remain high in South Africa.

Thus African workers are not likely to submit to continued control through contentment. The question still remains, however, is there anything that

they can do about it? Once more strikes indicate that there probably is. We have analysed a number of the factors which probably influenced the strikes and the re actions to the strikes. These include the growth of self-assertiveness associated, on the political level, with the leadership of people like Chief Buthelezi, and on the cultural level, with a growing rejection of "'White" models: and the importance of foreign criticism of and possible action against apartheid. But probably the most important factor was the changing nature of the economy, and "the changing role of Black workers in the economy. min es in the 19th Century targeted workers who went back home as soon as they had earned enough to pay their taxes or to buy a blanket or a gun. But as new possibilities of consumption are opened up, so do new wants become important, and when this is linked with the fact that the old style of low-consumption communal life is becoming economically impossible, this means that there is a continuing process of generation of wants. This has characterised all peoples moving into industrialised societies and Africans in South Africa are not likely to prove to be any exception. The pattern of demands in the strikes was of great significance. It was not only the worst-paid workers who went on strike and in our interviews with African workers after the strikes, those earning relatively good wagese also exhibited as much dissatisfaction as those earning very poor wages. As Deputy Minister Heunis pointed out, we must not neglect the demonstration effect: the wage gap itself, and not only the absolute level of poverty, is an important factor, and perhaps important factor in producing African discontent. Many studies elsewhere have confirmed that what leads to social unrest is not absolute deprivation, but relative deprivation (T, R. Gur: Chapter 2) , which is the difference between what you are getting and what you think you should be getting, and which is likely to remain high in South Africa thus African workers are not likely to submit to continued control through contentment. The question which still remains, however, is: Is there anything that they can do about it? Once more the strikes indicate that there probably is. We have analysed a number of the factors which probably influenced the strikes and the reactions to the strikes. These include the growth of self-assertiveness associated, with the political level, with the leadership of people like Chief Buthelezi, and on the cultural level, with a growing rejection of " 'White" models: and the importance of foreign criticism of and possible action against apartheid.

But probably the most important factor was the changing nature of the economy, and "the changing role of Black workers in the economy.

One of the employers ' representatives to whom we spoke explained the absence of massive arrests and the fact that those firms who dismissed their staff re-engaged most of them, by saying that "it is too jolly difficult to get a labour force as it is". He pointed out that groups of unskilled workers can be sent back to the homeland, but this is impossible 145. when there are strikes all over. Moreover, when workers are a bit skilled employers no longer want a labour turnover and are concluded, therefore, that it is "reasonable to expect more strikes". J' The proportion of African workers in the workforce is increasing the total number of Africans in the urban workforce is increasing. The number of Africans doing Jobs that require some sort of training is increasing. The traditional artisan ' plus several unskilled labouring assistants are being sung replaced by the machine-minding operative who requires several weeks of training and several months of experience in order to reach the normal level of production to be reached. All these factors mean that the potential bargaining power of African workers is increasing the level of skill must not be exaggerated. The Productivity and Wages Association survey places between 60 % and 75% of the ·African workers reported in the two lowest skill categories (see Chapter 3), But even these workers are not completely unskilled, as is shown by Dr. Jacobs I estimate of only 8% to tally unskilled African jobs. Nearly all Jobs, however simply require a certain amount of experience for a good regular level of production to be reached, Workers are rarely completely interchangeable. Automation as a strategy for lessening dependence on Black labour will undoubtedly be tried. But the capital-intensive industry, although requiring fewer workers requires "slightly more skilled and reliable workers. Thu; what is gained, from the employer's point of view, by requiring fewer- workers, maybe lost through becoming more dependent on those workers.Increased automation might, however, increase the overall unemployment level and thereby have some negative effect on bargaining · power derived from skill levels. Unfortunately, there are no completely reliable figures on African unemployment "in· South Africa. The 1972 Survey of Race Relations gives Government figures showing that there were 86 721 Africans registered

as unemployed or work seekers as at 31st. March 1971, but also quotes an estimate by an economist that there would be 72 8 000 unemployed by 1975 (page 253). Recently released figures from the 1970 census show that there were at that -date 283 90 0 unemployed Africans, 118 000 of whom wer':1 men. (RDM 14/12/ 72). The same article reports that according to the President of Tucsa, it is likely that, given rapid population growth and slow economic growth, unemployment has increased since 1970. However, in parliament this year the Minister of Labour gave the following statistics. In the years 1963 and 1969 an additional 840 000 Africans were employed in the South African economy, and 250 000 of these "were above the normal supply due to increase. In other words, the unemployment decreased over that period by 250 000" (Hansard Co. 136). In a later debate, he said that while 113 000 Africans enter the labour market annually, between April 1969 and April 1971, 165 600 African s' were absorbed annually in the Republic is manpower" (Hansard Co. 5473). Certainly, the trend over a recent eight-year period described by the Minister is for a fairly rapid decrease in the amount of unemployment but his figures have been disputed. The migrant status of many of the workers has also been suggested as a possible factor affecting their bargaining power. On the one hand, the United Party spokesman on Labour argues that migrant workers are more able to sustain long strikes (See Chapter 4). We have seen that this is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of migrancy in South Africa. The opposite point of view is that migrant labourers are not likely to take part in strike action, either because their impermanent urban status makes them very vulnerable or repression, or because culturally they are still oriented towards traditional forms of tribal organisations, rather than union and strike methods of protest. The Durban strikes were certainly not exclusively limited to urbanised workers with permanent residential rights in Durban. Much more data than we were able to obtain might reveal a slightly greater tendency for either migrants or non-migrants to strike, but our overall impression is that this was not a major factor. The stevedoring industry, in which there was one major or strike in Durban in 1972, and one threatened to strike, is staffed almost entirely by "contract" labour brought in on a migratory basis from the rural areas. Prior to the strikes, these workers were clearly the most militantly active in Durban. It is also significant that one of the largest previous strikes in South African history

was carried out by African mineworkers, in 1946 (Roux 33 9 - 41). 73557 workers were involved and they were virtually all migrants, many of them from outside South Africa, since the mines operate only with migrant labour. Thus there seems to be no reason to believe that migrants are less likely to strike. It may even be that when they are kept isolated in compounds as are the Durban stevedores, and the Coronation workers, then they may be more likely to strike. Nevertheless, the legal insecurity of urban life for most Africans is probably an important factor inhibiting militancy in normal times. Losing a job, and especially under "suspicious" circumstances, may mean being endorsed out to the rural areas, with little hope of return Workers we interviewed who had long service tended to be rather more nervous about striking. The cultural factor is probably of some significance, but, (all of this is decreasing as urbanisation becomes a more permanent way of life; and (b) even those workers who maintain close personal and psychological ties with the rural areas, nevertheless tend to adopt the urban way when they are in the towns (see Gluckman). Thus we conclude that the combination of a more favourable the employment situation, plus the growing political activism of the Homeland Governments, plus increasing foreign interest and pressure , is likely to increase the potential bargaining position of Bl ack workers , and this in turn is likely to represent a threat to the stability of the society in its present form.

E. Politics and Economics

In the above analysis, we have shown that the wage gap is, in part at least, a political creation, which will therefore require a political solution. We have tried to show the historical roots of the process of "enforced austerity", and the way in which White workers were able to use their political power to escape from the austerity. The net result of this history has been to produce a society in which the various groups are inextricably integrated into one common economy, but are integrated in such a way that there are certain structural tensions set up between them, in particular, there is a direct conflict of interest between Black workers and White workers, as well as a conflict on another level between Black workers and employers.

The problems involved in attempting to assess the likely results of the various possible technical step to remedy the situation are intimidatingly numerous. Here we can do little beyond summarising them. In our consideration of the public debate, we saw that both "belt-tighteners" and "market-expanders" were well represented. It may well be that these two schools of thought are related to different interest groups. Certain industries need cheap labour more than they need markets, and others need markets more than they need cheap labour. The fact that the entire English language press, with the exception of the small Financial Gazette, has supported the call for higher wages is perhaps significant here since this press has close links with business, and in some respects at least may be taken as spokesman for business interests. This would perhaps indicate the need for markets is becoming a more significant factor in the development of the economy. But even if ' this is the case, it does not mean that the steps necessary would not be contrary to the short-term interests of White workers.

Wolfgang Thomas argues that the necessary job advancement of Black workers must have some adverse effect on the position of White workers "There should be no illusion amongst white workers that increased upward mobility of Non-white workers will constitute an effective competitive fact factor the labour market and dampen their own real wage increases" (page 7). He points out also that it will require acceptance by Whites of a reduction in their status superiority. Furthermore, he suggests that the necessary changes involve, in addition to the problem of increasing labour productivity, the following difficulties:
(a) A reduction in some employment and the potential for increases in unemployment (c) adjustments in the profit rates of employers, and (do further increases in public expenditure as a result of infrastructure investments and higher wage and fringe benefits costs (page 13). Let us consider these three points in turn.

1. The likely impact of increased wages on the level of employment is very difficult to estimate. There are three different and, inevitably, interdependent factors which need to be taken into account. The first

is the impact on capital formation, and hence on the rate of growth, which we will consider in the next section. The second is the differential impact on different sectors of the economy of a possible increase in the cost of labour relative to the cost of machinery and of possible different demand patterns resulting from greater consumption expenditure on the part of the poorest section of the community. If wages are increased, then this might act as a spur to rationalisation of the usage of labour, or to the replacement of labour by machinery, which would, if production remained static, lead to an increase in unemployment. It might, however, require a relatively large increase to the present very low wages before it becomes advantageous to replace labour with machinery. Also, the increased wages might lead to an increase in demand, and so to an increase in production, thereby offsetting the tendency towards unemployment . This is complicated by the fact that different industries (a) use a different labour-machinery mix, and so will be affected in different degrees by a change in the wage level, and (b) cater for different markets, and so will be affected in different ways by a change in the incomes of the lowest paid workers.

An increase in workers' wages would probably mean an increased demand mainly for food and clothing, as well as for a range of cheaper manufactured goods, but would not increase demand for consumer durability and construction very greatly. From the point of view of the impact on employment, this is probably significant as the basic consumer goods referred to are also those which tend to be produced in relatively labour-intensive industries, so an increase in demand at that point would have the most favourable results on the overall employment situation. Also, these goods are probably least likely to be imported, so the new production would probably also be local. So one of the sectors most likely to be affected by increasing wages is also the sector most likely to be able to absorb the effect by increasing production for the expanding market (See ILD study " Towards full employment; gramme for Columbia"). to replace labour with machinery. Also, increased wages might lead to an increase in demand, and so to an increase in production, thereby offsetting the tendency toward unemployment.

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The third factor affecting unemployment is the change in the total number of work-seekers resulting from higher wage levels. in following the parliamentary debate on the wage gap, we saw that Government

spokesmen argued interlaid (a) that increasing wages would increase unemployment and (b) that African workers would simply work less if they were paid more (the target worker" argument). It is worth noting that these two arguments are contradictory. If increased wages will mean a decrease in the length of time that workers from the rural areas are willing to work for wages, then it cannot increase unemployment. We have seen that the "target worker" thesis is, in fact, false, but there are nevertheless a number of minor factors which taken together might lead to a sufficient decrease in the number of work-seekers to offset the possible increase in the number of unemployed. Firstly, at least some African workers are still traditionalist and rural-oriented, and may decide to spend less of their working lives in wage employment if they can still obtain a high enough income for their desired level of subsistence. Secondly, studies elsewhere (see Dobb p.111) have shown that very low wage levels force more wo men into employment that should not otherwise be the case. A large increase in wage levels might decrease the number of "working mothers", and might also modify the poverty-induced family instability which makes many such women the sole breadwinners for the families. Thirdly, given the strong demand for education, one likely effect is that adolescents would remain in school longer, and so would come onto the labour market later.

It is evident from the above that the relationship between wage levels and employment is extremely complex. Moreover, the questions raised above cannot be solved by economic theorising, but only by a more detailed empirical enquiry than has yet been undertaken (Such an enquiry is at present being undertaken by the Department of Economics at the University of Natal). All we are in a position to say for the moment is (a) that the wage increases resulting from the Durban strikes did not lead to a fundamental change in employment patterns in any of the firms that we investigated, although some did lay off a few workers some months later, there is no visible increase in unemployment in Natal and (b) that the arguments put forward so far to show that an increase of wages would be undesirable because it would put people out of work are inadequate. We cannot, however, rule out the possibilities that unemployment would result, and this would require at least short-term Government intervention, both

in the form of welfare assistance and possibly in the form of State investment. 2. Thomas agrees that real improvements in employment conditions involve “altering the relative shares of labour and 151. Profit income” (op. cit15). Profit rates in South Africa are relatively high, and most firms could take a cut in profits and remain viable. Problems only arise at macroeconomic eve What would bet the effect on the rate of investment and growth of a decline in the average rate of profit? A decline in the rate of profit does not inevitably mean a decline in the rate of saving. It could merely result in a decline in consumption among the relatively small group who receive most of the dividends. South Africa has a relatively high rate of saving. Over the past few years, about 25% of the annual gross domestic product has been re-invested in some form or other Nevertheless there is still room for a much higher rate of saving among upper-income property and shareowners. In 1972 total personal savings was Rl,205m, while the total income from property was R2,926m (see Quarterly Bulletin SARE 1973 577 & 78). Not all the personal savings would be made by these property owners, since high-income salary earners may be expected also to have a relatively high rate of saving. On the other hand, not all the property income is even theoretically available for reinvestment since some represent the income of small farmers and businessmen who subsist on meagre earnings. Yet this still leaves a very large amount of money which at present boosts the standard of living of the small group of people who, in South Africa as elsewhere, control the bulk of the income earning property. Thus the rate of personal saving by these individuals could theoretically be increased at the expense of their level of consumption to compensate for a decline in total profits resulting from increased Black wages. Relative austerity on the part of the rich certainly seems to be preferable to enforced absolute austerity on the part of the poor. What actually occurs is a function of power relationships, rather than of considerations of justice. Ideally, of course, if the investment is to be continued by means of enforced austerity on the part of the poor, then they should be compensated for their savings by receiving company shares to the equivalent of the wages which they have foregone in order to permit growth to continue. As it is, company growth resulting from low wages and high reinvested profits gets transferred to the

shareholders in the form of capital gains, thus further widening the income gap.

Although obviously just, this solution is not likely to recommend itself to the power holders in South African society since it would have the effect of transferring majority ownership of industry to the workers in a relatively short period of time, and we mention it only in order to underline the point that up till now growth has been underwritten by those who have benefitted least from it. If black wages are meaning fully increased the present high rate saving and of growth can be maintained, but only by cutting into the level of consumption of property owners and White salary and wage earners. This is not a problem of ''the market". It is a political question relating to the political and economic power of different interest groups. Black wage increase does begin to threaten the growth rate and so the rate of Black employment, then relatively simple technical measures, such as increased taxation or loan levies to in investment, fiscal measures to encourage their intention and reinvestment profits, and an income policy to slow down or stop the increase in the high er salary and wage levels, could be introduced. Such policies would have the same overall impact on savings as do present policies but they would affect various casses and interest groups, in different ways. The liability or otherwise of these policies is not so much determined by " economic laws" as by the political parameters within which the economy functions.

The problem is this, we have seen that growth requires investment which in turn requires the creation of a surplus. The creation of a surplus is made possible by the "enforced austerity of the Black workforce. The growth is in one way advantageous to these workers. It both makes available more Jobs! and makes possible some small increase in their standard of living. But the growth also makes possible a rapid increase in the amount of capital in the hands of White employers, and a rapid and visible increase in the standard of living of both White employers and White workers. This in turn generates serious social tensions if growth continues on the present pattern these tensions will certainly get worse and the marginal benefits which accrue to Black workers

as a ‘ result of the growth will increase their potential power without decreasing their aspirations but a shift in the distribution of income from profits, which are largely reinvested, to workers ‘ wages, which are largely consumed, might well slow down the process a: growth, increase unemployment, and thereby generating other kinds of social tensions. It may well be that both growth and a decline in conflict can only be achieved by redistributing income amongst consumers, without cutting down the amount going to new investment. But this means either an absolute or a relative cut in the level of white consumption. 153.30 It will also require Government intervention at various levels in the economy. Increased Government expenditure on infrastructure and education need not necessarily involve increased taxation. In part at least it could be achieved by shifting priorities within the present budget. For example, the enormous defence expenditure of R481 million in 1973 is only required because of the dangers of internal unrest. Reallocating a large part of that money to increasing Black satisfaction would seem to be a more fruitful way of ensuring social stability. Techniques of deficit financing might also be used in order to solve at least partly the demand problem and the capital. shortage pro blem in a period of transition. But there is likely to be a psychological resistance even to these measures on the part of the electorate, which on the whole does not seem to approve of spending money on Blacks. Especially when the objective of the. The whole programme is to alter the distribution of wealth, this is likely to prove a large obstacle.
Thomas concludes that “the material position of the Whites need not decrease substantially in the absolute sense “ (p. 17). But he concedes that even this “will encounter very strong opposition from the White electorate”.

The implication of this is that there is probably no simple technical solution to the problem. There are obviously much room for purely technical improvements associated with better training and greater productivity, but these measures themselves have social and political consequences and are also probably dependent on changes in the social and political status of African workers. In any event, such technical

improvements will leave relatively intact the conflicts of interest which we have described. Increased productivity may produce a bigger cake, and to that extent facilitate some redistribution, but this redistribution will not occur automatically as a result of increased productivity. In fact, the only effect might be to increase the likelihood of conflict by moving Africans in to more skilled jobs and thereby improving their bargaining power and raising their expectations without decreasing their sense of relative deprivation. This is why the discussion about trade unions is in fact central to the whole problem. A conflict of interest can only be contained within the social fabric if some institution analysed way of resolving the conflict can be designed. One way of turning the conflict into institutional forms would be to give Africans political rights and to allow them to act politically to defend their interests. In a sense, the Bantu stan system is an attempt to do this, but it is based on an inadequated definition of African interests. It is based on the assumption that Africans have no major stake either in the White-controlled urban is as or in the industrial work situation. Thus within the system, there is no institutional mechanism whereby the very real interests of African workers in these areas can be expressed. Since there is at present little likelihood of a change occurring in this regard on the level of formal political rights, it is necessary to analyse the part which could be played by trade unions in institutions analysing conflict so as to permit a process of orderly negotiation between powers replacing of a more unstable process of negotiation by strike and demonstration. We can also formulate a discussion about the necessity of institutions analysing conflict in terms of the concept of legitimation. We saw that workers are only likely to begin to cooperate positively in the production process when they recognise the employer's authority as deriving from something other than his power. Employers have, historically, attempted to legitimise their authority by arguing that it derives from their intrinsic worth. This sort of argument has undoubtedly been useful at times, but it is difficult to maintain it permanently, even if only because the workers are usually in the best position to see and experience the abundant evidence to the contrary. Legitimation only begins to assume a relatively stable form when employers in fact abandon the claim to absolute authority The workers begin to grant

some legitimacy to managerial authority when it appears at least, to emanate from ab a regaining process which enables the workers to place some limits on it, and to have some say themselves in some of the basic decisions affecting their conditions of work and, in particular, their wages. It is obvious that this condition can only be satisfied when workers have trade union rights which enable them to bargain as a body. Thus the introduction of trade union rights for Africans may be one of the preconditions for a dramatic increase in productivity. To the extent that there is a productivity problem it is not the cause of low wages, but the result of both the low wages and the lack of legitimacy of the system in the eyes of the workers.

Bendix concludes his remarks on the ways in which different societies have reacted to the problems posed by industrialisation 155. by saying "Merely to insist on the continued subordination of the "lower classes" when their traditional way of life has been changed profoundly is fraught with danger to society, as the Russian case illustrates" (p. 436). Thus, in either case, the total domination by the White group is threatened, but it is in the long-term interests of the Whites that some way should be found in which African workers can begin to satisfy their own demands in an orderly fashion. Are the Whites capable of making the necessary adjustment? This is a difficult question to answer inter- alia because the whites are not a homogenous and monolithic group. Power among the Whites is firmly in the hands of the most conservative who, as our analyses in chapter 4 show, are not even able as yet to understand the problem, let alone to solve it Amongst nearly all Whites there re is a very complicated mixture of varying degrees of material self-interest, and varying degrees of prejudice (see Schlemmer) The least prejudiced group "verligtes", seem to be willing also to make concessions to Black needs, and many of those who combine high material self-interest with a relatively low degree of prejudice are pragmatically aware of the need to make concessions in order to forestall an even worse fate. The reaction to the strikes among Whites shows the importance of these verligtes and pragmatic currents of thought, and, as we have argued, the nett effect of the strikes was to make more Whites aware of either the poverty of Blacks and/or of their potential power to

disrupt. There does seem to be a continuing slow shift away from the outright verkramptheid of some of the National Party MP's quoted earlier. Whether this move is quick enough is another question. It is also necessary to make it clear that the degree of change that Whites seem willing to envisage is not towards a just society, but rather to ward s a less unjust and more stable society, with the emphasis on stability, rather than justice. The solutions which we have suggested for some of South Africa's industrial and social problems necessarily involve red dressing, to some extent, the great imbalance in the distribution of wealth and power between Black and White, and as such are perhaps not what, all other things being equal. To quote Deputy-Minister Heunis once more : "Die blanke mag dalk selfs vind dat die beste belegging wat hyk an maak die belegging is w at ' n beter toekoms vir dienie-blanke verseker en ' n gesondes amelewing in Suid Afrika behou " .

CHAPTER 6
Trade Unions.

A. Communication

If we are to discuss worker organisations meaningfully we must have a clear idea of what their actual shop-floor function is to be, since on this will depend our account of what form they should take. During and after the strikes, comments from White politicians, the press and enlightened employers concentrated on the concept of "communication". It was argued that the strikes arose largely as a result of a failure of communication between workers and employers and that therefore the problem is to design institutions which will facilitate communication. We believe that the stress on the problem of communication is the result of a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of employer-employee relationships, and that institutions which are merely designed to improve communication between the two will go very little way towards improving the situation. We need, therefore to begin with an analysis of the notion of communication.
We pointed out earlier that most of the workers whom we interviewed believed that workers had in fact communicated adequately with

employers before striking. In the light of this, we need to ask what it is that needs to be communicated in order to prevent strikes. The replies of our interviewees can probably best be interpreted as meaning that they considered that the employers had no excuse for not knowing that their workers were desperately poor. They must surely be right in believing this. Most employers are literate, and many of them presumably read newspapers. All the English language Natal newspapers had given wide publicity to issues concerning African poverty in 1972. Furthermore, employers know what wages their workers are getting, and they also know that the cost of living has been rising. It seems difficult to believe, therefore, that they needed improved methods of communication with their workers in order to discover that they were poor.

What, then ought to have been communicated to them but was not? As we argued earlier, we believe that what they were ignorant of was the fact that the workers had reached a sufficient pitch of desperation to consider breaking the law by going on strike. What made them increase wages was not that they suddenly discovered that their workers were poor, but that they suddenly discovered that their workers had a certain amount of power.

The stress on the problem of communication quite ignores the dimension of power. It is based on the naive assumption of an essential community of interest between employer and worker; the belief that the employer has the best interests of the worker at heart, and that therefore any conflict between the two arises from some sort of misunderstanding, which can be cleared up by improved communication. As Hyman points out, this is based upon the assumption that industrial peace is the no rm and conflict pathological, from this perspective, disputes must be attributable to ignorance or to misapprehension; with knowledge of "the facts" workers would have no desire to strike. Yet while some strikes may result from misunderstanding, it would be naive to assume that disputes typically arise in this way" (Hyman P. 6O).

Bendix discusses the role played by the concept of communication

in the early managerial theory of the "human relations" school in the United States of America. He argues that it amounts to this: "What workers say is called information which management can use to 'eliminate misunderstandings' .But what employers tell their employees are the facts thus, in the words used to describe "two-way" communication, sub-ordinates are expected to listen so that they may learn, while managers merely receive information which they can use" (Bend ix P. 326). That is, there can be no genuine two-way communication between those who have the power to ignore what they are told and those who are powerless to do so. Our impression from our interviews with employers, as well as from press comments is, nevertheless, that Bendix's comment accurately characterises what is meant by "communication" by most employers.

To show that this approach is in fact inadequate we need to show in what ways there is a necessary conflict of interest between worker and employer. Within the context of a capitalist society, there is of course, a common interest between the two in the continued viability of the firm. If the workers really force up their wages to the point at which the employer goes bankrupt then they lose out as well. But there is a wide range of pro-fit rates at which it is possible for the firm to continue to function, and there is no " scientifically " to determine the able pro-fit rate which will maximise the advantage of both employer and worker. Wages are costs, and the job of the manager is to keep costs down. This does not mean that there is no downward limit beyond which the employer cannot, in his own interests, go. If wages are forced down too low, productivity will also fall. But between the upper limit of bankruptcy and the lower limit of hunger-weakened workers, there is a wide range within which it is in the worker's interest to push up and the employer's interest to push, or hold, down. Apart from the issue of wages, there is also the question of exactly what those wages are being paid for. How long should a working day be? At exactly what rate should the workers work during that day? How much of their energy should they use? Nobody believes that workers should work until they drop each day. Indeed, if they did do so they would lose in that they would be unfit to work the following day. But there is a wide range of time

and rate of work in which both the firm and the worker can survive, and so once more worker and employer have conflicting interests. Workers have a life to lead when they stop work, and naturally, wish to preserve as much as possible of themselves for that life. The employer, on the other hand, wishes to get as much of them as possible for the wage paid out. A solution to this problem may be reached by a process of implicit compromise and bargain which establishes conventional expectations on both sides, but ' unfortunately, the process of technological change continually tends to re-open the question. Goldner, in his study " Wild - cat Strike" comments as follows on the implications of this for industrial peace: " Market assumptions certain unremitted tin g pressure against the traditional, unstated assumptions men inevitably employ, exposing them to sudden challenges and unpredictable frustrations. In short market or contractual arrangements do not generate instabilities merely because they fail to provide an adequate foundation of specific expectations, but also , because they actively corrode the other possible sources of stability "
(Gouldner P . 162) .

The slogan " a fair day's works for a fair day's pay " conceals the fact that there is no objective measure for determining either what is a fair day's work or what is a fair day's pay. There will therefore always and inevitably be a difference of opinion between management and labour on the question, and whose opinion will prevail will be settled by the relative power of the two sides. However, if management asserts its power too freely and too brutally, this is likely to have unforeseen consequences. We have already discussed the problem of legitimation, the fact that individuals will only freely obey commands that they recognise as legitimate. In the absence of this recognition of legitimacy, workers may be coerced by the use of power, but this is necessarily an inefficient method, since management, hard though it may try, cannot be either omnipresent or omniscient. In a situation in which workers cannot organise or bargain they tend to react in other ways. One way is through the " conscientious withdrawal of efficiency", a form of private sabotage of the work process. In a situation where there are language difficulties, there is great scope for workers to practice this

technique. More active forms of industrial sabotage have also been widely observed in situations where workers have no way of solving their problems. In their study of industrial sabotage Taylor and Walton distinguish between three forms “Dur three types show individuals attempting to destroy or mutilate objects in the work environment in order (1) to reduce mansions and frustration, or (2) to facilitate the work process, or (3) to assert some form of direct control “ (. 226). From our point of view types, one and three are the most significant. They describe some of the examples that they have come across in their research as follows: “ We have been told by Woolworth’s sales-girls how they clank half a dozen buttons on the till simultaneously to win a few minutes rest from “ ringing up” Railway men have described how they block lines with trucks to delay shunting operations for a few hours. Materials are hidden in factories, conveyor belts jammed with sticks, cogs stopped with wire and rope, lorries I accidentally ‘ backed into ditches. Electricians labour to put in weak fuses, textile workers ‘ knife’ through carpets and farm workers co-operate to choke agricultural machinery with tree branches” (P. 219) There has been no research on this topic in South Africa, but it is likely that industrial sabotage of this type is widespread, ranging from purposive neglect of machinery to sabotage of the finished product. It is difficult to discover the culprits, so it is rarely publicised. However, in a dispute in Durban last year the abattoir management alleged that workers were purposely nicking the animal skins in such a way as to make them unsaleable, and this practice had clearly arisen as a result of worker dissatisfaction Another incident occurred during a recent strike at a Clothing firm in Johannesburg when a large number of finished clothes were slashed. An incident of the first type of sabotage occurred in another Johannesburg factory when an experienced worker, for no apparent reason took down a fire extinguisher and emptied it onto thousands of rands worth of imported material. Walton and Taylor make the following comments on the relation between industrial sabotage and trade unions: “In functional terms, we could describe trade-union negotiations as taking over from sabotage and other forms of direct action and institution arising conflict through collective bargaining unplanned smashing and spontaneous destruction are

signs of a powerless individual or group our experience suggests that they principally occur in industries which are in an almost pre-trade union' state, where there is a lack of any general shared consciousness among the workers such as might be found in industries with a history of collective industrial action" (P. 237).

Inadequate or weak bargaining mechanisms are likely to have even wider consequences than these. Dahrendorf, discussing a period of relatively weak trade unionism in West Germany, writes: "We find instead of work disputes, individual actions whose connection with social conflicts is scarcely recognisable at first sight. Sinking work morale, growing fluctuation, indeed even sickness and accident rates may be indications of such redirections of industrial conflict. In these manifestations, the redirection of conflict ap pro aches repression of energies. Some of the workers display an attitude of Bl most hopeless resentment; this may be come manifest un announced and in ways removed from all chance of control" (Society and Democracy in Germany , Weidenfeld and Nicholson P,178 quo ted in Hyman P.170) .
In these descriptions many South African employers will probably recognise a portrait of their African workforce, Unfortunately, instead of recognising the roots of such problems in the industrial structure, such employers usually interpret it in racist terms and their racial stereotypes are reinforced in such a way as to prevent them taking any rational action to remedy the situation. Yet, loo ked at objectively, it is almost incomprehensible how, considering the way in. which African workers are treated, employers can expect them to co-operate enthusiastically in the production process. This is why we believe that it is important to show that this situation is not peculiar to bl ack workers, but reappears in different firms in all societies in which the workforce is not accepted by itself and by other social groups as being part of the wider society. From this discussion of communication and the structural tensions of the workplace we may draw the following conclusions:

(1) There are in fact objective conflicts of interest between worker and employer, and these conflicts cannot be overcome

merely by improving communication between the two.

(2) Institutions for mediating between the two sides must Therefore, recognise the fact that there is a power dimension involved.

(3) If in fact, the institutions that exist are such as to render the worker powerless or to deny the actual power that they do have, then there will be certain consequences which, although not usually recognised by management as resulting from the conflict situation, are in fact the only weapons which remain to the workers. These consequences are cumulatively very serious indeed.

(4) This means that, although in one way it is in the employer's interest to maximise his power to coerce the workers, in another way the failure to grant some power to the workers over wages and conditions is actually against the real interests of both worker and employer.

(5) Finally, in the absence of some meaningful distribution of power, communication itself will almost certainly not occur, Powerless individuals usually structure their communication with the powerful in such a way as not to antagonise them. That is, they tell them what they think they want to hear, It is interesting that this is another phenomenon which is usually interpreted in racist terms: "The Bantu always say what they think that you want them to say". But this is not a characteristic of '' the: Bantu", It is a characteristic of the powerless in all markedly hierarchical so ci al structures. This is why the works committees that do exist have proved so unsuccessful as instruments for communicating real grievances. This does not mean, of course, that the question of communication is entirely irrelevant. There are many minor points of friction in a factory which may exist purely because of ignorance on the part of management, but which nevertheless may contribute to the building-up of tension in the factory. Furthermore, in order to institutionalise conflict in such a way as to minimise the inevitable damage that it causes, it is important that there should exist good channels of communication between acknowledged leaders

on each side. But it is probably better to describe this process as "bargaining", Rather than as "communication".

In considering the various institutional structures which have been advocated, we must therefore concentrate on the extent to which they permit workers to exercise sufficient power to give them some say over wages and conditions.

B. Bantu Labour Regulations ACT (AMENDED)

Largely as a result of the strikes, the Minister of Labour introduced a number of important amendments to the previously titled Bantu labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953. We have already briefly discussed the original Act (see Chapter 3), and have referred to public criticism of that Act (See Chapter 4). The main shortcomings of the act were that the works committee system failed to win the confidence of African workers; African workers had no direct access to the real negotiating machinery in the Industrial Councils, and Africans had no legally recognised powers with which they could back up their demands. The new act makes changes in all three of these spheres.

A. Works Committees

The new Act makes provision for two different kinds of committees, liaison committees and works committees. Alison committee is a joint management worker committee, with equal representation action for both groups. In addition, the employer is empowered if he so wishes, to appoint Chairman (7(l)c) 0The Committee may "make such recommendations concerning conditions of employment of such employees or any other matter affecting their interests as the committee may at any time deem expedient" (7(2)). Thus the liaison committee is a purely advisory body. The Act gives it no power to oblige

the employer to supply it with relevant information. Furthermore, although the worker representatives are to be elected, no provision is made within the Act for any system whereby the representatives can either report back to the workers as a whole or even meet as an officially constituted group. The Act specified that a Works Committee, a wholly elected workers body, may only be set up "in respect of any establishment in which no liaison committee exists" (7A(l)). It is noteworthy that in the first draft of the bill, published on the 4th. In April, the accent was placed on Works Committees, rather than on Liaison Committees while in the final version at the instigation of employers organisations this was reversed, leading the Institute of Race Relations to comment "There has been a decided shift of emphasis in the employer 's favour between the earlier and the later Bill" (RR 83/73 p. 5).

A Works Committee may be set up in any establishment in which there is no liaison committee, and in which there are more than 20 workers. If any section of an enterprise has more than 20 workers, a works committee may be set up for that section. Either employers or workers may take the initiative, but the meeting to elect the committee has to be chaired by the employer rather than by the Bantu Labour Officer, as was the case in the initial Act. However, in terms of the new clause 24 (l)c, employers are forbidden to take any punitive action against any employee if "such employee has participated in the establishment or election of the activities, or functioned as Chairman, Secretary or member of a liaison committee, Co-ordinating works committee or works committee, or participated in the activities, or functioned as a member, of a Regional Committee". The penalty to which the employer is liable for such victimisation is a maximum of 2 years imprisonment and/or a fine of R600, and in addition, he may be ordered to reinstate or compensate the worker in question. The function of a works committee is "to communicate the wishes aspirations and requirements of the employees in the establishment or section of an establishment in respect of which it has been elected, to their employers and to represent the said employees in any negotiations with their employer concerning the conditions of employment or any other matter affecting their interests"

(7A(l0)). This implies that a works committee is, interalia, entitled to raise the issue of wages. In larger firms, where works committees, after consultation with the employer, may establish a co - ordinating works committee consisting of the chairman and the secretaries of the respective works committees (7Bll). Such a committee has similar power s to a works committee in a smaller establishment.

B. Conciliation Machinery

Members of a works committee are not empowered either to participate directly in the negotiations of an Industrial Council or to make a direct request for a Wage Board Determination. Nevertheless, the new Act does expand its powers slightly in these directions, by introducing possible, though lengthy, channels for their participation in both these pieces of conciliation machinery.

The original Act created a Central Bantu Labour Board, with an all-White membership appointed by the Minister, and a system of Regional Bantu Labour Committee, each with a White chairman but the remaining members being Africans. All these members were appointed by the Minister and were usually not all representative of African workers in the area in question. But the amended Act provides that the new members should "in so far as the Minister deems it expedient ", be selected from amongst the members of elected liaison or works committees. Furthermore, section_ 4 l 4) now specified that in dealing with any dispute the Regional Bantu Labour Committee must co-opt at least one or more such elected workers representatives for the trade and area in question and that such a co-opted member would have full rights on the committee. Also, whereas previously only the White so-called Bantu Labour Officer was entitled to attend the meeting of an Industrial Council in order to represent the point of view of African workers, in terms of the new section 9(2) he may also take with him any member of the Regional Committee, including a member co-opted from the industry in question. Thus the Act provides a route by means of which African workers may officially participate in Industrial Council deliberations affecting their wages although they may not vote. -As we

have said, the route is a long one, and only those representatives who are approved of (footnote: We have been helped in our analysis of the Act by two renowned publications of the Institute of Race Relations numbered RR49/73 and RR BJ/73 and by a roneoed pamphlet " Your rights and the Bantu Labour Relations Act" is sued by Urban Training Project). both by the Minister and by the Bantu Labour Officer will actually be allowed to participate. Nevertheless, it is significant that even this theoretical right should have been granted.

There is still no direct method whereby workers can demand a Wage Board investigation of their industry since the Wage Board can only intervene at the request of the Minister, acting on the recommendation of the Central Bantu Labour Board, which, is an all-White body appointed by the Minister. However, in so far as workers are now more likely to be represented on the Regional Committees, they are closer to this board than previously. Also, the changed regulations regarding trikes enable them to put pressure on the Minister to act.

C. The Right to Strike

The amended Act for the first time recognises that Africans have the right to strike under certain circumstances, but it is important to realise exactly how narrowly circumscribed those circumstances are. Striking is prohibited either during the currency of an Industrial Council agreement within one year of a wage board determination referring to the matter in question or if the matter has been referred by the Minister to the Wage Board. If none of these conditions applies, then, if the relevant works or liaison committee has failed to negotiate an agreement, after 30 days' notice, a. strike may take place. What this means is that, if the· Minister refuses to refer the matter to the Wage Board, then the workers may strike. That is, the new legislation regarding strikes is essentially an avenue whereby the workers in an industry in which there is no Industrial Council, can demand a wage board enquiry. However, once the wage Board has produced a determination, they cannot oppose it. This does give the workers some power. It is likely

that low-wage employers, faced with the prospect of a wage board investigation, will make greater concessions than they might have otherwise made. Also, it is likely that the wage board will take some account of the worker's determination, hence the likelihood that they might strike anyway. Nevertheless, it means that the final say rests with the Wage Board and, as we have seen, this body has tended until now to make determinations which are rather more favourable to employers than to workers. We earlier quoted the Minister of Labour as saying that African workers now have the same strike rights as other workers. This is inaccurate since an Industrial Council Agreement can only be reached with the consent of the unionised White, Coloured and Indian workers to whom it applies. They can therefore re-use the threat of strike action and after the conciliation procedure has been exhausted, can't actually go on strike in order to obtain a better agreement. As the African workers have no vote in the agreement, this procedure is not in fact open to them, and it is this procedure which is the real source of the power which unionised workers have in the Industrial Councils. As for other workers, this is inaccurate since an Industrial Council Agreement can only be reached with the consent of the unionised White, Coloured and Indian workers to whom it applies. They can therefore re-use the threat of strike action and after the conciliation procedure has been exhausted, can' actually go on strike in order to obtain a better agreement. As the African workers have no vote in the agreement, this procedure is not in fact open to them, and it is this procedure which is the real source of the power which unionised workers have in the Industrial Councils.

D. Extending Wage Rates

There is one further innovation in the bill. Clause lla permits a group of employers in an area or· trade not covered by an Industrial Council to approach the Minister with the request that certain minimum wage rates be applied to the entire industry in that area. If the Minister thinks that they are sufficiently representative, then he may make an order binding on all employers. This clause is designed to prevent one: two employers from undercutting the others, and thereby obviate the

situation in which each employer claims that he cannot raise wages because of his co-competitors who are meanwhile, all justifying their low wages in the same way. ‘

E. Conclusion

Although this Act does contain some improvements, we do not believe that it greatly alters the position of African workers. Indeed, in some respects, it is worse than the original Act It does, however, constitute something of a psychological breakthrough, since it admits the possibility of Africans striking and it also accepts that Africans should have some role in Industrial Councils, rather than be represented there by sites. Both these steps are important, not in themselves, but in that, once they have been taken, it may be easier for the Government to move significantly further in this direction in the future. The Act is still based on the Works Committee system, and all the objections ta this system must still apply, in particular, works committees can only facilitate communication; they cannot give the workers any real power in the factory. For this reason, workers are not likely to take any interest in the works committee as such, and not even their communication role will be carried out. The liaison committee is considerably more useless than the works committee. Without any trade union organisation outside the enterprise to back them up, assist them with technical advice and help them in gathering information and without any institutional way of reporting back to the workers within the enterprise, such committees will be impotent. Several of the employers whom we interviewed said that they were in favour of works committees because they preferred “talking to our own people”. But it is precisely for this reason that works committees cannot play a significant role in preventing wild cat strikes. In the brief time of the monthly liaison committee meeting, or of the meeting between the Chairman of the works committee and the employer, it is very difficult to break down the relations of authority and deference which exist in the enterprise during the working day. Such meetings are likely to produce only an illusion of communication. Employers want these committees because they believe that they can retain their dominance over them, but to the

extent that they can retain their dominance, the committees play no useful role. The history of the works committee system in South Africa shows that the workers are fully aware of this, reason, workers are not likely to take any interest in the works committee as such and do not even communicate the role will be carried out. The liaison committee is considerably more useless than the works committee without any trade union organisation outside the enterprise to back them up, assist them with technical advice and help them in gathering information and without any institutional way of reporting back to the workers within the enterprise, such committees will be impotent.

Several of the employers whom we interviewed said that they were in favour of works committees because they preferred “talking to our own people”. But it is precisely for this reason that works committees cannot play a significant role in preventing wild cat strikes. In the brief time of the monthly liaison committee meeting, or of the meeting between the Chairman of the works committee and the employer, it is very difficult to break down the relations of authority and deference which exist in the enterprise during the working day. Such meetings are likely to produce only an illusion of communication. Employers want these committees because they believe that they can retain their dominance over them, but to the extent that they can retain their dominance the committees play no useful role. The history of the works committee system in South Africa shows that the workers are fully aware of this.

C. The United Party Plan

The United Party advocates a three-tier · system:

(a) Full trade union rights for "sophisticated Africans" such as journalists and, presumably, other such highly professional workers;

(b) Affiliate membership of existing unions for urbanised workers doing work competitively with workers who are already unionised; and

(c) A slightly modified works committee system for "tribal" Africans doing mainly unskilled jobs. There are a number of problems with this system, Firstly, two different and quite possibly incompatible criteria are offered for allocating workers to the different categories urbanisation and job category. It is likely that a migrant

(d) since this was written the United Party has altered its policy and now accepts the principle of full Union rights for all African workers will be relatively skilled workers since the category of a migrant labourer is not an intermediate category of workers moving into an industrial environment for the first time but an artificially created category of workers who are "permanent migrants" and may send all their working life in industrial employment. Also, it is likely that one will find urbanised workers and migrant workers doing the same jobs, and it would scarcely be possible to give them different types of organisation, secondly, it is not clear what would be meant by affiliation". Clearly, it is a concept designed to reassure White workers that they will be able to maintain control of their unions, and so it falls short of full union membership. But in that case what precisely does it entail, and what use will it be? If one defines the category of affiliated workers narrowly, so as to apply only to Africans doing skilled jobs, then it will apply to a relatively small number of Africans, and seems to be aimed at preserving the large wage gap between skilled and unskilled workers by permitting a select few Africans to join the "Labour Aristocracy. This will do nothing to resolve the structural tensions which derive from the wage gap itself. If, on the other hand, one defines the category more broadly to include the very large number of Africans who are doing the

down-grad ed artisan jobs created by the process of job fragmentation and of mechanisation, then either there will be enough of them to warrant they are having considerable power in the union, or, if this is not envisaged, it is not clear in what sense they would be members of the union at all. Thirdly, the major argument for making a distinction between the two types of workers is invalid. In the Parliamentary debate on trade unions, this argument was expressed by the then U. P. spokesman on labour, as follows: "One of the reasons why the system of collective bargaining works is that in normal countries both employer and an agreement on one side and the workers on the other side are dependent on (sic) their livelihood, their security in life, on the industries in which they are employed. When you have migrant workers, which is the policy of the government, those workers who are migrants are not completely dependent on the industries. They can, and not only temporarily but for a very long time take refuge in the tribal organisation that exists and makes it possible for its members to live in this way they will find it possible to strike for much longer and cause much more destruction than the sophisticated worker would do " (Hansard P. 973 Col. 10 51-52).

This argument is both invalid and doe sot even apply to a large number of the workers who are to be excluded from unions under the scheme. It is invalid because the migrants are not, in fact, voluntary migrants who work in the industry to supplement their agricultural incomes. They and their families are more or less totally dependent on their industrial incomes. The level of assistance now available from the tribal organisation is not different in kind from the savings strike funds and income from working relatives available to the so-called " sophisticated worker". The argument does not even apply to many workers, since, as the spokesman himself says, many of the workers who are to be excluded are in fact urbanised workers. Thus we must conclude that the United Party plan is not vastly different from the present system, and to the extent that it is different it is quite incoherent.

D. The Botha Commission. (U. G. 62. 1951)

When the National Party came to power in 1948 it appointed an Industrial Legislation Commission of Enquiry, also known as the Botha Commission. The Commission's terms of reference included all matters pertaining to African workers, including the question of African trade unions. The Commission was no "liberalistic" body, as can be seen from the argument it uses against the proposal that African workers should simply be included with other workers under the terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act: The complete social and political equality of all races, which is the logical result of this proposal, would inevitably lead to the disappearance of Europeans as a separate race and of European civilisation in South Africa" (P. 220). Nevertheless, and much to the disapproval of the government t which rejected the proposal, it proposed that African trade unions should be recognised and given bargaining rights. Admittedly stringent conditions were laid down for recognition and the strike powers of such unions were essentially the same as those embodied in the 1973 Act which we have discussed. Nevertheless, in reaching its conclusions the Commission showed, within the framework of its own ideological presuppositions, great scrupulousness in considering and analysing the various arguments presented to it. It remains a valuable document since it refutes all but one of the arguments which are still being brought forward against African trade unions and finally makes it clear that the only reason that it cannot recognise free trade unions and full bargaining powers for Africans is that it sees a conflict of interest between White workers and Black workers, and accepts the necessary paramountcy of White interests. We shall not analyse the report in detail, but it will be useful to quote some of those conclusions which are relevant to the argument.

1. The Commission recognises the inadequacy of leaving the protection of African interests either to White unions or to Government Officials:

(A)"The evidence available to the Commission on the point is sufficient to satisfy it that the interests of Native workers have suffered in the process of collective bargaining between employers and European employees. In

some cases, it would seem that their interests are deliberately sacrificed by the European employees in order to gain benefits for themselves" (p.196). (Bl "It is true that officials of the Department of Labour are supposed to attend meetings of industrial councils to represent the interests of Native workers and others, but this is not satisfactory as firstly these officials are not always acquainted with the needs of the Native workers, and secondly, they find it difficult to contend single-handed with both the employers and the employees" (p. 19 6).

2. The Commission recognises that African workers are increasingly becoming permanently urbanised and that the reserves do not provide a real alternative for them:

(A) "1t can be stated with certainty that there is an increasing tendency toward permanent urbanisation" (Para. 86).

(B) Criticising the Economic and Wage Commission of 192 5, which argued that " Adequate Reserves protect the Native against exploitation", the Commission replied: "The contention was based on the assumption that adequate reserves were in existence The reserves are more inadequate today that, they were in 1925" (P. 194). We should add that they are even more inadequate in 1973.

3. After a detailed analysis of the state of African unions, and much criticism of their shortcomings, the Commission finally rejected the idea that either African union leaders or African workers were not fitted for trade unions:

(Al "Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory features characterising the Native Trade Union Movement, the Commission is satisfied that there are a number of unions which are well-organised and are conducted on correct lines. The leaders of some of these Unions have in the past rend e red considerable assistance by advising against and re straining their members from taking drastic action; they are able to place the case for the workers before wage-fixing bodies, and some of them have shown indications of a measure of ability to negotiate with the employer" (P.211)

(B) Referring to witnesses who argue that African workers had not the necessary experience to participate in organisations the Commission writes: “It is necessary to remind these witnesses that under the tribal system every adult male is entitled to take part in tribal councils and courts. A very large. numb e r of tribal Natives, therefore, are accustomed to taking part in meetings, ‘ stating their points of view in public arguments and in weighing pros and cons of any proposal, and that they are also accustomed to accepting the discipline imposed by the majority at public meetings. The Commission feels that the training tribal Natives have had in this respect forms an admirable background to their participation in Trade Unionism” (p. 25).

4. The Commission also rejects the idea that African trade unions will necessarily become “political”: “The Commission was impressed by the fact that all the responsible: leaders! who appeared before it, were interested only in the economic improvement of the Native workers represented by them” (p223)

5. The Commission rejects the thesis that it is adequate to give workers rights in their “Homelands” “if it is not practicable to apply a policy of total territorial segregation of the races the n the Commission considers that the assumption on which the opponents of the recognition of Native trade unions based one of their main arguments, largely disappear”(Para. 1614). 6. The Commission considered the committee system should be introduced, and concluded: “While the Commission is unable to recommend the use of works councils as a substitute for trade unions, it does recommend that employers should have been encouraged to establish such councils in every workshop of sufficient size” (Para.1846). 7. The Commission also rejected the proposal that migrant labourers should be excluded from trade unions (The present United Party Plan), partly on the grounds that it would be impracticable, costly, and would result in many anomalies (See Para. 1698). 8. finally, although the Commission never says so explicitly, it makes it clear that the only reason left for differentiating fundamentally between African and other workers is the fear that Africans would be able to use their power to improve their position at the expense of the White workers, and perhaps also at the expense of the employers; “The Commission feels constrained

to recommend strongly against the Native workers to hold the balance of power or dominate in the process of collective bargaining" (Para. 1788). It is evident that the Commission is not under the illusion that labour relations are merely a matter of communication.

9. The Commission also concludes that the attempt to suppress African unions. "Disregards both human psychology and the trade union movement in other countries" (P 224), and "it does not believe that such a policy is in the interests of South Africa or would, in the long run, be affective"(p.234). We believe that Commission adequately disposes of all but one of the objections to trade unions which we have come across. We have also argued that its own objection is a short-sighted one (see Chapter 5), and that although full African trade Union rights will undoubtedly mean some alteration in the pattern of income distribution in a way unfavourable to Whites, nevertheless the attempt to use coercion to prevent this likely to have even more unfortunate results. It also "disregards both human psychology and the history of the trade union movement in other countries".

E. The Van Der Merwe Plan

Before turning to a more detailed discussion of the role of trade unions, it is worth considering another plan for Trade Unions within the framework of separate development. This was put forward at the 1972 Tucsa conference by Professor P. J. van der Merwe, of the Department of Economics at Pretoria University:

1. We have to accept that in terms of present legislation all African workers are citizens of the various African "Homelands ". These homelands either have or will have the power to legislate on labour matters within the homelands. They can therefore legislate for African trade unions within the homelands.

2.Such unions could, inter-alia "propagate the drawing up of labour agreements between the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the various homeland Governments. They could possibly even participate

to an inter-governmentally agreed extent in the preparation of such agreements. “

3. Citizens s of the homelands working in the White controlled areas should be able to belong to these trade unions and through them participate in negotiations with the South African Government, who would in turn deal with the employers.

4. The homeland Governments could appoint Labour Diplomats” who would negotiate at the place of work with officials of the South African Government. These Diplomats could come from the ranks of the trade unions.

Based on a Tucsa publication “Africans in Trade Unions? “, and on a copy of his speech kindly provided by Professor van der Merwe.

5. The Labour Diplomats could collaborate with existing works committees and could participate in Industrial Council negotiations.

6. In the case of citizens of a number of different homelands working in the same factory or same industry, then it would be possible to draw up multi-lateral agreements signed by all the relevant Governments. This scheme was heavily criticised by trade unionists to whom it was, presented, but it is worth noting two interesting features. Firstly, the scheme seems to be enormously complicated. It might appear that the worker with a problem approaches an official of his or her Government, who approaches the South African Government, who in turn approaches the employer, who then relays a reply back along the same circuitous route. But in fact, a close examination of the plan shows that what is intended is that workers should belong to a trade union which is de jure based in the homelands but de factor based at the place o’. works the elected leader of the trade union would be “legitimated by being appointed labour diplomat and would negotiate with the employer, using the Bantu Labour Officer as an intermediary. What this would probably amount to is that this official would merely be present at negotiations between trade union and employer. The point of the scheme, therefore, is to give Africans wide trade union rights but to describe those rights in terms compatible with the theory of separate development. As

such, the scheme has great interest.

The second point is that the plan would have significant political consequences, By officially giving the homeland governments home responsibility for the conditions of the large part of their electorates who live in the 'White-controlled areas it would ensure that 'the urban workers became an important pressure group in homeland politics, obliging the homeland governments to maintain a South African-wide perspective and preventing them from becoming merely spokesmen for the peasantry and rural traders. Furthermore, introducing a system of multilateral agreements involving several homeland governments it would encourage cooperation between those bodies. ' The chief weakness of the plan is that it does not make clear whether it would give African workers the right to strike, which is the main weapon in the trade union armoury. In spite of this, some modified versions of the Van der Merwe plan may, in the future, provide a useful form of compromise between the fact of, the Urbanisation of Black workers and the theory of their citizenship in the rural homelands.

F. Trade Unions

People only work for other people when they have no alternative: that is, when they have no direct access to the means of production, and so cannot work for themselves. This means that those who control the means of production have power over those who do not. Although the employer is in principle equally dependent on the worker, from whose work he gets his income, this dependence is not symmetrical. Firstly, the employer almost inevitably has greater reserves than does the worker, who may be faced with starvation as the result of even a short period of unemployment. Secondly, although the employer is dependent on workers, he is not dependent on any particular workers in a situation in which there are many workers and relatively few employers it is easy for the employer to keep wages down using the fact that the worker needs urgently to work.

That is, competition amongst workers for jobs can produce a situation in which each worker is, in order to get a jo b, willing to do more work

for less pay. The workers ' great numbers mean weakness for each individual worker.

Workers can, therefore, only improve their position if they can combine to put an end to competition in between themselves. Through combination they can turn their numbers, the source of their weakness, into a source of power: This is the essential purpose of a Trade Union. However, the combination itself is meaningless unless it means combination in action, in refusing to work for a particular employer unless certain wages and conditions are provided. That is, workers can only have some control over their working conditions if they are in a position to say "I shall not work unless and each individual worker can only say this if he or she knows that all the other workers are saying it at the same time. The right to have a Trade Union is nothing without the right to strike; the right to combine in refusing to work unless satisfactory conditions are provided. This is the only real power workers can have. The other kinds of behaviour we have considered, the withdrawal of efficiency, industrial sabotage, and malingering, are all strategies of impotence. Yet, though workers ' power and influence rest on the right to strike, there can be few workers who actually welcome a strike. The worker nearly always lives close to the margin, and any loss of income is a serious matter. A strike always means personal deprivation for workers, but it rarely does so for employers.

Trade union officials always dread strikes since a strike if it is lost, will weaken the organisation and, even if it is won, will place a severe strain on the Union's usually slim reserves. It is important to grasp fully these two obvious points since continuous irresponsible reporting of strikes in countries where they are legal has built up a stereotypical picture in the middle-class White mind a picture of workers longing to down tools on the slightest pretext; striking from mere bloody-mindedness, and bringing their societies to the edge of chaos. This picture is quite false and a moment's reflection will show that, for the reasons -given, it is not even coherent. Nevertheless; because this reaction to strikes is so widespread, it is worthwhile quoting at length the following comments by Hyman on the significance of strikes in Britain a country widely

believed in South Africa to have been " ruined" by strikes: "Contrary to popular imagination then 'striking is an exceptional habit' (Clegg, 1970: 318). This fact is underlined by the findings of a survey carried out for the Donovan Commission (government Social Survey,1968). Only one Trade Union member in three, and a slightly smaller proportion of managers, could recall a strike at their place of work since they had been there; and of this third, roughly a half were aware of only one stoppage. Since the Trade Unionists interviewed had been with their existing firms for an average of ten years and worked manners for nine, this indicates how rare strikes really are in most work situations neither way of putting strikes into perspective is to compare them with other eventualities which affect industrial production in the 1970s when striker days reached a new post-war peak, the total was Just over 10 million. By contrast, industrial accidents cost over 20 million working days. An unemployment level near the million mark is the equivalent of well over 200 million working days, and in recent years loss of time through certified sickness has accounted for over 300 million working days an effective influenza vaccine - or stricter control over unsafe working conditions would be likely to save far more working time than the most draconi anti-strike laws" (Hym an pp33-3 4).

Thus in societies where strikes are legal, they are relatively rare occurrences, and in all societies workers and trade unionists dislike striking. But what is important is that the threat of strike action should be available to the workers when they negotiate with employers over wages and conditions. In these circumstances, where each side has some power, it is likely that the resulting bargain will not be dramatically unjust, and that the workers will accept the legitimacy of the employment contract, rather than see it as purely coercive. The power of the workers must extend to some extent into the question of work organisation as well as to the question of wages.

The traditional rural employer in South Africa usually assumed that he had seven days a week, 24 hours a day lien on his workers ' labour. Of course, he would not expect the workers to work for this period, but he would expect them to be available at any time to do any job which the

employer saw fit to demand of them, without any overtime payment. It was possible to demand this, internal because the employer controlled all aspects of workers ‘ lives, including their housing. In an urban environment, this sort of control is not usually possible, although the compound system sometimes approaches it. Still, there has often been a tendency for employers to believe that black workers owe them absolute obedience, at the very least during the hours of employment. Yet there is no reason why this should be the case. Indeed, from the worker’s point of view, it is vital that this should not be the case. Firstly, the worker’s dignity as an individual, as well as his or her willingness to recognise the legitimacy of orders, requires that the employment contract contain reciprocal obligations regarding work, specifying the limits within which orders will be accepted. ‘ Secondly, the worker s own personal needs outside the work situation require that the amount of energy spent in work should be contractually limited.

Thirdly, the principle of organisational solidarity with other workers, on which the worker’s power is based, requires that the possibility of competition between workers through speeding up work or taking on more duties be eliminated. By agreeing to take on tasks which were not initially agreed upon, an individual worker ·is threatening the control that the workers as a group have over their “collective job-territory”, and is thereby threatening his or her own position. It is for this reason that the question of job description plays such a central role in collective bargaining. The workers have the right to demand that their duties should be precisely specified and agreed to by themselves and this demand is not something in addition to the question of wages; it is the other side of the wage contract and just as important for the workers and for the workers ‘ ‘ the organisation as is the question of wage s itself. It is also, of course, a fertile field of conflict between workers and ‘ management, and is particularly serious in a situation of rapid technological change, in which new machinery requires new kinds of jobs, and may even make some workers redundant. Workers are not. likely to accept the legitimacy of an arrangement whereby an improvement in methods of production instead of benefiting everybody involved in the production process, actually serves to deprive some

of them entirely of their jobs, and thereby also threatens the general principle of solidarity. It is, therefore, reasonable that the Union should be consulted about the introduction of new methods, and should be able to ensure that the benefits resulting from the introduction of these methods are spread as equitably as possible. The Trade Union then is the means whereby the workers can combine to exercise some power over their own destinies. Through their representatives, they can bargain with management. By pooling their limited individual funds, they can employ full-time organisers and can equip themselves with the necessary information. This is a vital function of the full-time Union officials. As we saw, one of the main weaknesses s of the works committee system is that without any outside assistance the workers are not in a position to get the information they need in order to evaluate management proposals. Under these circumstances, they are not in a position to dispute management's version of the facts or to put forward well-conceived alternative proposals. There is no two-way communication.

In order to carry out these functions the Trade Union organisation, must be organised internally in such a way as to ensure that solidarity is maintained by the members. This requires, on the one hand, that decisions be taken democratically and ' so reflect the will of the majority of the members and ' on the other hand, at requires that members be willing to accept majority decisions with which they disagree. In practice, this means that the union as an organisation will require some sort of actions which can be used to ensure that the majority" decision is carried out. When a minority of workers reject a democratic decision and attempt to. ' scab ' (that is act as strike-breakers), this usually results in great bitterness, and it is important that there should exist institutionalised ways for dealing with disputes of this kind, otherwise they are likely to be resolved by violence. Indeed, scabbing of this sort is probably the most frequent cause of violence by workers in the course of industrial disputes. The two most important institutions for this purpose are the picket and the "Union Shop": The picket is really a technique for bringing moral pressure to bear on would-be scabs. The individual worker should be morally bound by the majority decision to

strike, and a peaceful picket of workers at the entrance to the place of work is designed to make this moral duty clearly visible. The “union shop” principle embodies more concrete forms of sanction. It is the principle that anyone who joins a particular firm should also join the union, and be subject to union discipline. This -means that the union can in the last resort threaten to expel are a calcitrant member from the union, and also to have him or her dismissed. The “union shop” must be distinguished from the “closed shop”, which embodies the principle that only somebody who is already a member of the union can get a job. The closed shop is used mainly by “craft unions” of skilled workers, in order to ensure that their skills remain scarce, and so also to maintain a relatively large differential between their wages and those of less skilled workers. The morality of this principle is at least questionable, although no more than any of the other forms of monopoly that characterise a capitalist economy. But the morality of the union shop is on much clearer and firmer ground. The principle is simply that it is not fair for an individual to accept the many advantages which come from collective organisation and collective bargaining, and at the same time to refuse to accept the responsibilities which each member has to make sure that the organisation remains viable. A Flanders comments “An organisation must have effective means for ensuring that its members comply with its decisions. These means are its sanctions; the rewards it can offer and the penalties it can impose to uphold its internal discipline. On the strength of its sanctions, rather than on the appeal of its objectives, the unity and power of an organisation depend” (“What are Trade Unions for? 11 p23).

G. Recomendations

We conclude, therefore, that trade unions, with the right to organise freely, and to use the strike weapon as a last resort, organised and democratic lines, and possessing their own sanctions over members, re the pretend it ion far stable industrial peace in South Africa. Only full trade unions can integrate African workers into the. The industrial economy in such a way that they will begin to co -operate

wholeheartedly in its development. Only such trade unions can permit genuine communication between workers and management. We accept that such a system will mean that there will be a shift in the power relationships in South African society, that it will mean that managers will have to accept that they cannot have total control over what happens in the workplace and that White workers will no longer be able totally to dominate the collective bargaining process. But we do not believe that a disgruntled and alienated workforce, disinterested in their jabs and only able to express · their grievances through wild cat strikes and in bloodier forms of protest, such as the tragedy at Carletonville which occurred as we were completing this menu script, is in anybody is interest. The only alternative is Trade Unions. After all, what we have said is the. The most obvious and widely accepted commonplace of advanced industrial societies. The significant thing is that such commonplaces are not recognised by most employers or by the Government in South Africa. That is the real problem which South Africa has to face. South Africa does not have a labour problem. It has an employer problem. Our conclusions would remain very abstract if we did not discuss some of the strategies available for changing that situation. We would, therefore, like to conclude by making some recommendations to specific groups.

A. To African Workers

Trade Unions for African workers are not illegal, even though the powers which they may exercise all far short of the ideal. But even the kinds of unions which are permitted to exist can perform valuable functions for workers, in particular by collecting information, familiarising them with the protective legislation which does exist and helping to police legislation. If they are strongly organised within a factory, such unions will in many cases be able to oblige employers to accept them as negotiating agents, as has occurred in the case of the National Union of Clothing Workers. Employers need some degree of co-operation on the part of their workers, and if they can only get it by defector recognition of the Trade Union, then it will be by grant such recognition. In any event, the Union organiser, working from base outside the

factory, is in a much better position to force his or her attention on the employer than a worker in the factor who is dependent on the employer. We recommend therefore that the African workers should form Trade Unions, as, even though they must remain unofficial, these are the best means· available to workers far from the defence of their rights. It has been argued that, given the present legislation, workers should attempt to manipulate the works committee system that such committees are dominated by Trade Unionists. The Union leaders in the factory would then have official status as works committee leaders. They could insist, through the works committee that the employer recognises and negotiate with the Union. If the employers refused to do this they would still be the committee obliged ta negotiate with the Union members on the works committee an additional benefit of such arctic is that it would give the same legal protection from victimisation, The Act permits the election of committees of up to 20 members or one-quarter of the workforce, whichever is the smaller, from each section of the enterprise, and it also provides for the election of an equal number of alternate representative these workers would have same legal protection from victimisation.

Against this argument, it must be painted out that there is a considerable difference between the concept of a democratically elected and legally protected works committee as it exists in the Act and the work s committee system as it actually operates. The protective clauses would only work if there were a peaceful and well-staffed Government agency dedicated to ensuring that they were applied. In fact, the Bantu Labour Officers are just not in a position to police this legislation even if. They wanted the new Act, in any case, to decrease their authority since previously they had to supervise the meeting that found the works committee whereas now this task is left to the employer. Before the Bill was tabled in Parliament there was a clause which had it possible for the Department of Labour to intervene if the officials thought the employers were reluctant to co-operate in establishing works committees, according to the Minister, “The abjections ta that from the employers’ organisations, however, were so strong that I felt that the grounds I should withdraw it, because I need those people cooperation

for this to work" (Hansard 18 Cal. 87 76) This incident indicates both that employers wish to be in opposition to do what they please with the legislation, and also that the Minister is much more concerned about their co-operation than he is about the workers. Thus, in fact, employers have wide scope within which to twist or ignore the law. Although the Act specifies that works committee members are to be democratically elected, the employer is in a strong position to prevent the election of certain individuals or categories of workers, to impose meeting procedures and limit the competence of the committee to certain topics. For example, the Metal and Allied Workers Union reports that in one Durban Ley and factory, the workers, in conjunction with the Union, organised elections to increase the size of the works committee from five to twenty members as is permitted by the new Act. However, the plant manager merely informed the workers that he was not willing to deal with a works committee of that size. A complaint by the Union to the Head Office of Leyland produced no positive response. In addition, although 14 out of 20 works committee members were members of the Union, and although the workers used the works committee to demand recognition of the Union, Leyland refused to do so. Similar examples of the way in which employers ignore the law can be multiplied Since the law exists, it is possible for the workers to take the employers to court, but this is a very expensive process, for example, when four workers at Raleigh Cycles in Johannesburg were dismissed illegally in connection with attempts to form a works committee, an expensive court case was required to get them reinstated. Even though in terms of the final settlement Raleigh was obliged to pay the greater part of the costs, it still cost R2 000. A complicating factor in this kind of case is that it is very difficult to prove victimisation. It is usually very easy for an employer to find some pretext for dismissing any worker. All things considered, workers will be better protected by the effective organisation than by the provisions of the Bantu Labour Regulations Amendment Act.

If the workers are backed by a Trade Union which can help them get the information about their actual legal rights, and can assist them in court cases, then they are in a slightly better position. But, firstly, even Unions are not likely to be able to afford frequent legal expenses,

and secondly, long wrangles about the rights and status of works committees are likely to take attention away from the important problems of wages and conditions. This can only be to the employers ' advantage. Thus we conclude that, as a general tactic, the formation of works committees by African Trade Unions is not to be recommended, nevertheless, it could perhaps be used fruitfully in some specific cases, perhaps in dealing with particularly intransigent employers. We do not believe that the workers have anything at all to gain from the formation of liaison committees. They should refuse to cooperate with such committees. Finally, we should like to point out, that, although up to now we have spoken in terms of "African Unions", there is no law forbidding unregistered open unions of all workers. We believe that it is important that unions formed by and for African workers should remain open to workers of all races. It might seem that there is no advantage to be gained for workers who could join registered unions by joining open unregistered unions. In fact, this is not necessarily the case. There are a number of industries in which the registered unions represent such a small segment of the workforce that they have no real bargaining power. Such workers might be able to benefit more from a well-organised and representative open union than they can from the present system. "African" unions should also recognise that there are very many unorganised Indi and Coloured workers who could be recruited to open industrial unions and thereby further strengthen the position of the workers. From the point of view of other workers, there are also strong and obvious moral and political arguments in favour of identification with African workers in common unions. White workers have the political power to compensate for organisational weakness, but this is not the case for Coloured and Indian workers. The sort of division in the working class in the Works committee system is designed to institutionalise is to the disadvantage of both African and Indian and also Coloured workers.

To employ We have argued that it is in the long-term interests of both employers and workers that there be adequate institutional forms for dealing with evitable industrial conflict through peaceful negotiations. We appreciate the fact that many employers find threatening the very

idea that workers have rights. It threatens not only their income but also their status and their self-image. Nevertheless, we would urge all employers to reflect upon the account we have given of all the unforeseen consequences of an alienated workforce, we would like to point out that there is no law preventing employers from recognising and negotiating with African Unions. Those more enlightened employers who fear that their market position may be undercut by more unscrupulous employers paying lower wages should note that the trade union is an important agent of enforcing conformity in an industry. By permitting an African trade union to operate in their factory, such employers will be providing the union with an organisational case from which it can spread into other factories. It is not in the interests of employers that trade unions in their industry should be weak, as this is likely to confuse the situation.

The Botha Commission reported that one of the main difficulties faced by African unions was the problem of inadequate finances, which was made worse by the fact that collection of subscriptions often had to be left to workers who were not adequately trained in financial matters and had no facilities for keeping the funds properly, .and, living near the breadline were in any case liable to minor temptations. This meant that ' finances were often in a chaotic state, it was difficult to trace the whereabouts of funds and so union activity was inhibited. The best way of getting around this problem is by a stop-order system, which could enormously simplify the financial affairs of nascent unions. We also believe that if some progressive employers would take the lead in setting up a body to propagate the idea of African Trade Unions in South Africa, both to encourage their fellow employers to recognise trade unions, and also to bring pressure to bear on the Government to change its policy, this could have a great impact. Finally, it should be pointed out that the International Trade Union movement is likely in the future to take an increasing interest in South Africa, and although workers in Europe or the United States will perhaps not be driven to act through racial discrimination in employment practices, the issue of the employment of non-union labour is likely to be regarded in a much more serious light. It is quite likely that in the future overseas unions will

begin to take action against individual firms which have a particularly bad record on this issue. Such action may take the form of refusing to handle any goods produced by such a firm. International firms with branches in South Africa are likely to be especially vulnerable .to · this kind of pressure, but it will not leave local firms untouched unless they are so small that they have 'no overseas contacts. ' We believe, therefore, that it would be wise for firms to attempt to short-circuit this process by taking steps to recognise African unions immediately. We would like to stress, also, that the level of trust of 'Black workers in their employers is so low that employers should not expect miracles overnight as the result of policy changes. Workers are bound to be suspicious of any employer initiative, and it is likely to require a great deal of patience, explanation and goodwill on the part of employers before any marked change in the present climate can be brought about.

C. Registered Trade Unions

In countries which have industrialised within the context of capital institutions there tends to be a common pattern in the development of trade unions. The organisation begins with craft unions of skilled workers, who use the apprenticeship system to maintain their scarcity value, and who are usually more highly educated and have been urbanised for a longer period. The large numbers and the lack of urban skills on the part of the unskilled workers makes it more difficult for them to unionise. The pattern of industrial growth tends to weaken the dominance of craft unions. In particular, the more they increase their wages in relation to those of unskilled workers, the more economical it is for employers to introduce mechanisation techniques needing less-skilled workers, thereby rendering the skilled craftsmen redundant. Thus it comes to be in the interest of the craftsmen themselves to help the unskilled workers in their industry to raise their wages. For example, according to Turner: "An important motive in the expansions of the (British) Amalgamated Engineering Union downwards from skilled engineering mechanics, to recruit lower-skilled engineering operatives, was that the standards of the former were threatened by the lower wages of the latter and by the increasing technical possibility

of replacing skilled by less-skilled labour" (Turner p.103). The consequence was that the differential between skilled and unskilled wages was narrowed, but it was done by raising the wages of the unskilled workers, without harming the position of the skilled.

In South Africa, the process began in a similar way. The idea of a trade union was introduced in Britain by skilled workers recruited for Kimberley and the Rand in the late nineteenth century, and all the early unions were essentially craft unions. The problem of large differentials soon began to encourage employers to attempt to replace these workers with less skilled workers. This was the issue in the 1922 Rand Strike. At the end of the first world war, an agreement had been reached between the Chamber of Mines and the unions, specifying the ratio of black to White workers to be employed in the mines. By 1922 the mines were less prosperous, and the wages of the White (skilled) miners were so high that it was in the interest of the employers to replace them with unskilled (African) workers at lower rates. However, because of the particular South African political framework, this had consequences different from those in Britain or elsewhere. The White workers were able to use the issue of race, and their own monopoly of political power, to force the maintenance of the ratio of Black to White workers, and at the same time to keep the large differentials. The unions remained open to an elite of workers only, and it was not in their interest to organise the unskilled African workers. Thus the normal pattern of development was distorted by political factors. The pressures which were encouraging different employment practices were not thereby abolished, they were merely contained. The question now is how much longer they can be contained. It is this problem which has led many existing unions to come out in favour of some form of trade union rights for Africans.

For these unions, the problem is that both the number of Africans and the proportion of Africans in the industry are increasing continuously, and so the registered unions are becoming less and less representative of the workforce. At the same time, with the proliferation of different types of industry and with rapid changes in techniques, it is difficult to

use the same tactics as were used successfully by White mine workers Speaking at the 1972 Tucsan conference, Mr. C. H. Crompton, of the Iron Moulders Society of S. A, which has participated in imposing a form of job reservation in the Engineering Industry, nevertheless had this to say about the position of his union "The realities of the position are such that al ready in this industry 70'/l, the persons employed, are people who are not able to belong to a trade union. People who are living on less than 27 cents an hour! The remaining 'percentage comprises of Indians, Coloured and Whites and they are getting comparatively high wages. But make no mistake about it, we are becoming more unrepresentative of the workers in the industry every year, and to close our eyes to the fact that Africans cannot, and will not be permitted to belong to our unions, is something we cannot be. We also cannot open the floodgates to this unorganised horde, that will bring our standards right back to ninety or a hundred years. ago" (Africans in Trade Unions? 32) . This well sums up the attitude and the dilemma of many unionists today. Mr. Crompton's own solution seems to be that Africans should be organised within the existing unions, in such a way as to ensure that the present wage levels for skilled workers are maintained. He is strongly opposed to separate African. unions: '" we could not tolerate two unions talking to the same boss, and trying to arrange wages and conditions" (p29)

The problem facing the registered trade unions is that on the one hand, they may see the necessity for or? analysing Africans but that on the other hand they wish to do so in a way which does not weaken their own position. But since their own position is based, at least in part, on the fact that African workers have up till the present been deprived of their policy is essentially contradictory. We that it is in their real interest to recognise that in order to ensure social and industrial stability it is necessary that the African workers be given some power, and therefore to assist in the task of unionising power only African workers. Given present legislation, it can be done by building up separate African unions. But in any event, the relation between the two units will be determined in the same way as would the relationship between less and more skilled in the same Union; that is by the balance of power 1

thing from the actual technical employment structure of the industry. The unionisation of African workers will still leave the more privileged White, Indian and Coloured workers, who are ensconced in the machinery of the Industrial Conciliation Act, in a favourable position. It will not bring about an ideally just solution. It will only give the African workers a certain just amount of new leverage and the possibility of beginning to realise some of their demands by bargaining, rather than resorting to non-institutionalised forms of active or passive that is it will begin a process of negotiating process towards change, rather than the process of swamping which some unions fear.

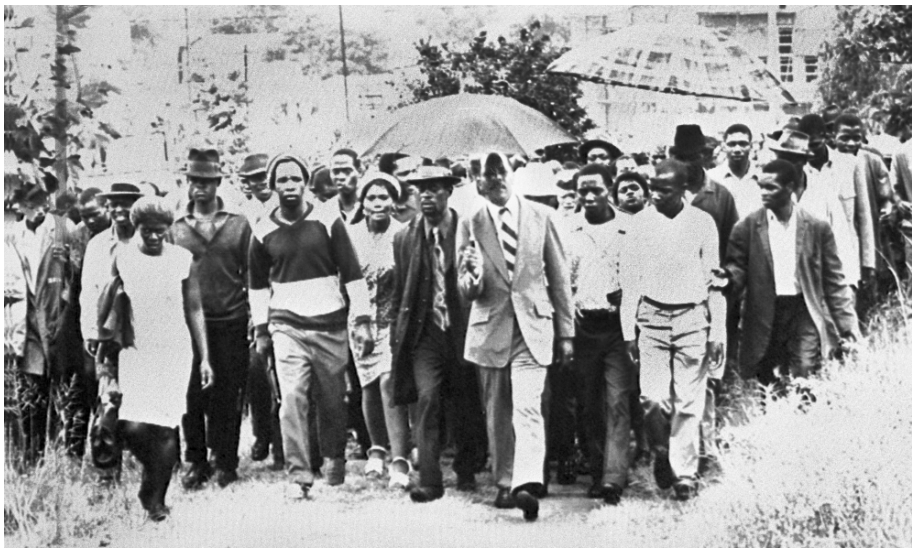
In light of these remarks, we would like to make the following recommendations:

1) Registered unions should give advice and assistance to African workers wishing to set up Unions in their industries. They should encourage employers to recognise these unions,
and if necessary, should act as intermediaries between African Unions and employers in the early stages.

2) The registered union should agree to present arguments prepared by the African union to the relevant industrial council and if possible, should press for the defector right of African Union representatives to be present at industrial council meetings.

3) The registered union should ensure that all fringe benefits are extended to African workers, and where possible the African unions should play a part in administering these benefits. In this way, a practical community of interests could be built up between the two unions, preparing the way for cooperation on the basis of equality when that becomes legal.

4) Although the registered union should be ready with advice and assistance it should not try to control the African union. If African officials either voluntarily or obligatorily accept such control they will



inevitably become alienated from their members and the object of unionisation will be defeated. It will merely cause further conflict within the industry. There exist independent bodies such as the Institute for Industrial Education, the Urban Training project and Central and ministration Services, which offer valuable facilities to African unions. These bodies should be supported as one means of ensuring the independence of African unions from domination by the existing registered trade unions.

E. White Parliamentary Opposition

It is important for the United Party to rethink its labour policy in the same way as it has recently altered and elaborated on its federal policy. As we have argued, the present policy is neither coherent nor very different from that of the Government. We pointed out in our analysis of the Parliamentary debate that there is a basic difference between the perceptions that the two sides have of the nature of South African society. The United Party, unlike the National Party, recognises that it is one society, to which African workers have contributed in full measure. They should embody the consequences of this in a new lab policy. Schlemmer's general conclusion arrived at after a detailed analysis of the relationship between socio-political attitudes and party preference, that: " The attempt to win votes by being made racist than the National Party is likely to fail": holds in the sphere of labour as well. There are strong arguments why it would be in everybody's long-term interests to fully unionise African labour, and it is important that the United Party should use those arguments without fearing the empty racist slogans of the National Party. It is to be hoped that the recent departure of the United Party's long-time Labour spokesman, Mr. Marais Steyn, will facilitate this. We believe that the White opposition parties should do more than just formulate policies. They can also take an active part in encouraging the unionisation of African workers now. One of the most pernicious aspects of South African society is the tendency to confuse National Party policy with law. It is up to the opposition to explain to the public that the fact that it is against National Party policy that Africans should have Unions does not mean

that it is against the law.

F. Homeland Governments

The "homeland" system of separate development institutions is built upon the false premise that African workers are only incident tally present in " White" areas and that their essential interests lie in the rural homelands. This means that the system of homeland Governments does not offer institutional means for resolving conflicts which arise in urban areas where African workers in fact face their major problems. Nevertheless, because all Africans, however long they may have lived in the urban areas, are considered to be citizens of the homeland governments, homeland leaders have a valid excuse for intervening to the extent that they are able in the urban areas.

Since their electorate is to a great extent either actually employed in the White-controlled areas, or else financially dependent on those who are employed, it will ·also be politically expedient for them to do so. In terms of Section 3 of the Bantu Homeland's Constitution Act (21 of 1971), they are empowered to legislate respecting labour matters within the homelands, and this power, together with certain of their other powers, may be used to assist urban workers. We, therefore, recommend the following;-

1) Branches of trade unions operating in the homeland s should be given legal recognition. This would enhance the status of these unions in the urban areas and give greater protection from employer victimisation and from security branch harassment.

2) The homeland Government and homeland unions could provide both technical and financial assistance to unionists in the cities.

3) The homeland Governments can give voice to the problems of urban workers and can use their influence to encourage employers to recognise trade unions. In particular, they could have considerable

influence over -the employment practices of foreign-owned companies.

4) To the extent that there is still some uncertainty amongst African workers as to the legality of trade unions, the leaders should make it clear that they are in fact legal and should give their support to the formation of such unions.

G. The Government

There was much debate after the strikes about whether the government or the employers were responsible for the situation. Government spokesmen pointed out that it was, after all, the employers who are paying the low wages·, that provoked the strikes, and that the minimum wages stipulated by the wage board were only minimum wages; there was nothing to prevent employers from paying higher wages if they wanted to. In a sense the Government was right but in making this kind of excuse they were entirely ignoring the fact that Governments exist for a specific purpose. We would endorse Professor van der Horst's remark that "one c anno t and should not rely on the decency, religion or social responsibility (or anything else) of either employers or employees to bring about social justice it is the function of Governments to govern and to provide idea framework to ensure that employers ' and employees ' actions conform to the public interest" (RR11/73, p.4). Ina capitalist society employers are out to make a profit for themselves, and there is no reason to believe that individual Profit-seeking will necessarily further the common interest.

In Chapter 5 we stressed that the present structural tensions in South African society are not the product of purely economic forces. The economic behaviour of individuals always occurs within a legal and political framework. this framework is never neutral. It gives greater or lesser power to various groups in society, and so permits greater or lesser degrees of exploitation. The pure laissez-faire economy of nineteenth-century Europe was formally based on the principle of no Government interference in the working of the economy. In fact, it was based on continuous Government intervention to ensure that

property-aimers had wide powers over the property less. The rights and obligations created by the legal and political framework usually reflect the general balance of power of the various groups in society, and as we have seen in South Africa this framework was created specifically to serve White interests and could be created in that way because whites had military and political power. To this extent, of course, it is necessary to conclude that one should not rely either on "the decency, religion, or social responsibility (or anything else)" of Governments to bring about social justice. The South African government, in particular, is elected by a specific group to serve what that group conceives to be its interests, and it would be naive to assume that it would act in any other way for purely moral reasons. However, the point that we have made over and over again in the course of this analysis is that there are so ci al forces at work which have unperceived consequences that threaten the stability of society.

Economic development brings about changes in the power of the various classes which make up society. In particular, economic development has created a large, alienated and increasingly angry African proletariat. The real power relationships in society are changing but the institutional ways of mediating between conflicting groups are not taking this change into account.

Thus the institutions are less and less able to copy social conflicts in a peaceful way. In such circumstances, a government has two alternatives. It can attempt to hold back the process of change by increased repression. Or it can resign itself to the necessity of making creative compromises, compromises which will retain for the time being some aspects of White privilege but will at the same time begin to in the rate. African workers into society.

Although our government has shown a few signs of a willingness to compromise, it seems to have opted basic ally for them first alternative. We do not believe · that this is a wise choice. It is not in the best interests of the white group, and it is certainly not in the best interests of South Africa as a whole.

ISISEBENZI

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KWAQALA KANJANI

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NM	Natal Mercury	(Durban morning newspaper)
RDM	Rand Daily Mail	(Johannesburg morning newspaper)
S. Express	Sunday Express	(Johannesburg)
S. Times	Sunday Times	(Johannesburg)
S. Tribune	Sun day Tribune	(Durban).

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