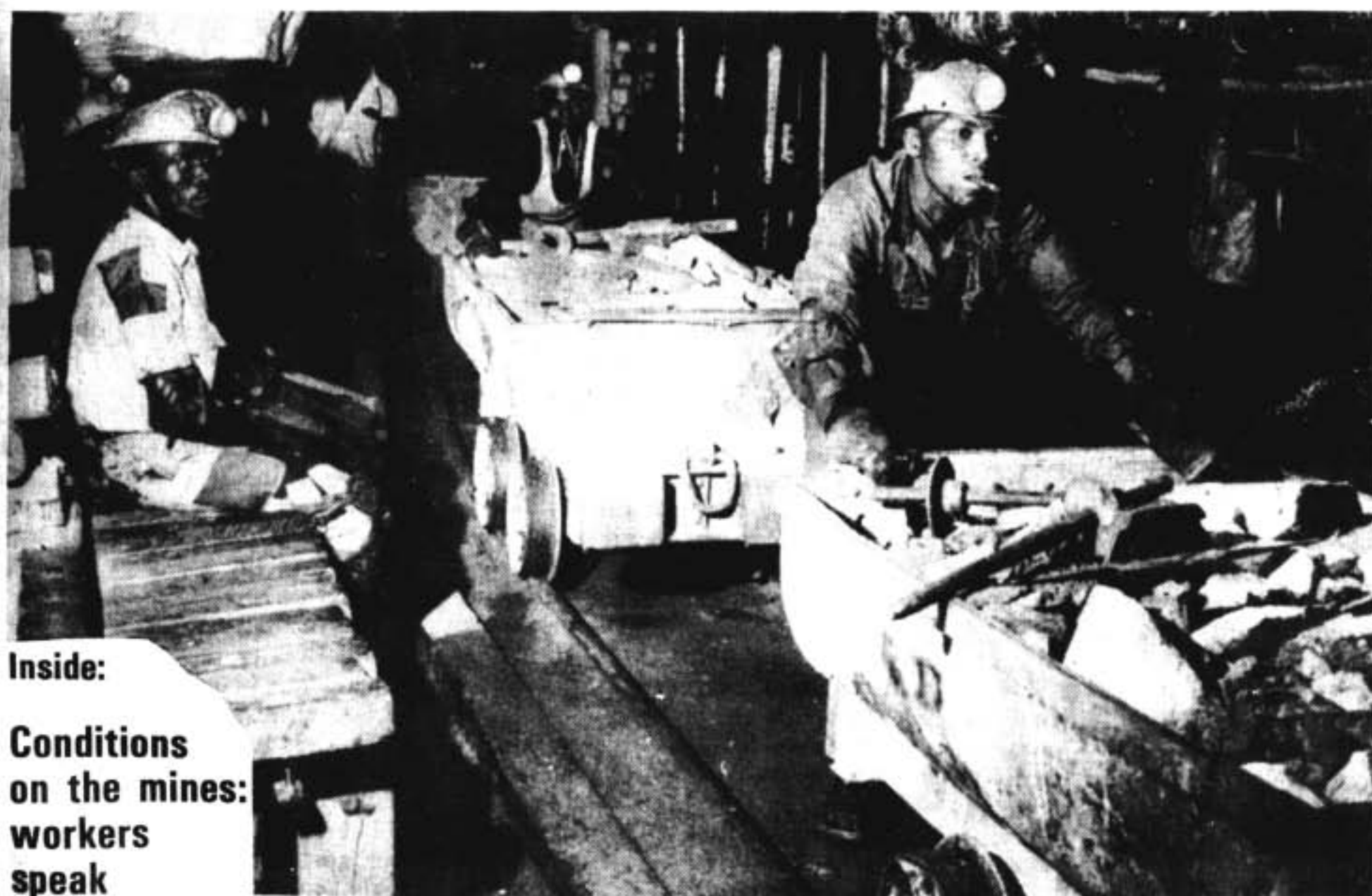


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inqaba YA BASEBENZI

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THE ECONOMY IN 1984:

What can workers expect?

In 1983, capitalism put on its worst performance in South Africa for more than a generation. When the year's production figures come out, they are expected to show a fall of about 4% compared with 1982.

This was only partly the result of the drought. The main reason has been the crisis affecting the whole of world capitalism—plus the fact that South African industry cannot compete with the giant monopoly enterprises of the advanced countries, and is slipping further and further behind.

After the Second World War (for reasons we have explained in *South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution*), capitalism flared up like a match and burned brightly for nearly 30 years. Now the flame is burning down.

Then world trade went on expanding by more than 12% per year. For the past three years, however, world trade has actually shrunk, or at best stagnated. Factory closures, mass unemployment, rising prices and falling living standards for working people have become permanent even in the richest capitalist countries.

The system is on a downhill road—but the road is uneven. After each down stretch there is a brief upturn... before it is downhill once again!

During 1983 the United States of America started an upturn. Because of the size of that economy, it is pulling the rest of the capitalist world with it.

In South Africa, too, there are signs that expansion is beginning. Production in 1984 is expected to increase by about 3%.

However, the increase will be patchy. If the gold price stays low for some time, the value of mining production will stagnate or could even fall.

Manufacturing production, on the other hand, should rise by about 10%. This follows a fall of about 10% between 1982 and 1983, when the bosses slashed one in every seventeen jobs in manufacturing in order to preserve profits.

The big question is whether the bosses will now invest in expanding the factories, introducing new and better machinery, etc., on any significant scale. We think they will not.

The labour of the working class has put fabulous wealth, multi-millions of rands, into the hands of the capitalists. That is what the system of exploitation is all about.

In times past, the capitalists used much of this wealth to expand the industries, create new jobs, and so increase their power and riches along with the growth of production throughout the economy.

That was the basis of the strength of the capitalist system, even though the workers suffered in poverty.

Now, however, the capitalists can no longer invest massively in production—because their system has come up against its limits world-wide. It is now suffering from an incurable disease.

Even in the mighty USA, the present economic upturn is expected to come to an end during 1984 or, at the latest, 1985. This will again drag the rest of the capitalist countries down with it. The bosses can no longer keep on expanding production without in-

flation (price rises) leaping up again and threatening a collapse of the entire system.

At the same time, every new downturn threatens to bring on a collapse like that of the Great Depression of 1929-1933.

In South Africa, during the past recession, the bosses turned away from investment and instead put their profits into buying up other companies, property speculation, gambling on the stock market, sending money abroad, and so on.

For this the working class has had to pay the price, in unemployment and worsening poverty. At least half the black population are today living in "absolute poverty".

Now, with a new period of expansion beginning, it is very unlikely that the bosses will make big investments. They will start by using the existing capacity of the factories which has been lying idle.

They will be very hesitant to invest further because they know that a new downturn will come, probably by 1985, and they do not want to be sitting with even more expensive capacity which they cannot use to make profits.

Therefore, they will continue to seek quick profits through financial deals and speculation. Like ticks, they will suck the blood of South Africa, while weakening and failing to build the real wealth-producing capacities of the economy.

This must enter the understanding of every organised worker.

Even though the new upturn is likely to be weak and short-lived, it

can have important benefits for the workers' movement.

Even a small increase in production raises the confidence of workers, and puts them in a better position to demand higher wages and other improvements, without the same danger of getting the sack.

With demand for goods increasing, the bosses will be anxious not to lose production time. Workers can use the opportunity to win back what they lost during the recession.

Already the change in the situation in the motor industry is shown by the pre-Christmas stoppage at Ford's Struandale plant.

The trade union movement will be well placed to take full advantage of the economic upturn—if it unites without delay into national industrial unions within a single federation.

1984 will also bring new opportunities to build the trade union

movement to at least one million members—with a massive recruitment drive and a united campaign for a national minimum wage, for permanent unemployment benefits for all, and other basic demands.

But we must also use 1984 to raise the understanding of all workers about the nature of the capitalist system, and what is needed to solve the problems of society.

The economic upturn of capitalism will not even begin to solve the unemployment, poverty, homelessness and starvation. Conditions will continue to worsen among the mass of the people.

Probably within two years there will be another severe economic crisis, multiplying the burdens on the workers' backs.

The task lies before the working class to lead South Africa out of this

terrible situation. How can this task be tackled?

* By building a united trade union movement;

* By organising our fellow workers to build and lead the United Democratic Front; and

* Above all, by raising a clear program for the overthrow of the apartheid state, for a democratic workers' government, and for the taking over of the great productive forces of mining, industry, agriculture and finance into the hands of the working class.

31 December 1983

(*Postscript:* Department of Manpower statistics, recently released, indicate that a wave of strikes has set in since December.)

ITSHOLELO KA 1984: Babereki ba ka solofela eng?

Ka 1983, tsamaiso ya bokonatedi (capitalism) e dirile mo go sa itumedisang go feta mo dikokomane tse di fetileng. Fa dipalo tsa thodo ya madirelo (production figures) di tswa, di solofelwa go supa gore thobo e tla bo e ole ka 4% fa di tshwantshiwa le tsa 1982.

Lebaka le le tona ke gore itsholelo ya mafatshe otlhe a bokonatedi e mo mathateng, le gore madirelo a Afrika Borwa a ka se ke a gaisanye le madirelo a magolo a mafatshe a a tlihabologileng. Lebaka le lengwe e ne

e le mathata a leuba. Ke ka moo itsholelo ya Afrika Borwa e wela kwa tlase tlase.

Morago ga Ntwa Ya Mafatshe Ya Bobedi, (ka mabaka a re neng ra a tlihalosa mo bukaneng ya S.A.'s *Impending Socialist Revolution*) bokonatedi bo ne jwa gola jaaka molelo o tuka, mme jwa tswelela sentle mo dingwageng tse masome mararo tse di latelang. Jaanong kgabo ya molelo oo ea tima.

Ka nako eo (1945-1975), papadi ya mafatshe otlhe e ne ya oketsega ka go

feta 12% ka ngwaga. Jaanong mo dingwageng tse tharo tse di fetileng papadi ya mafatshe e ole tota kana re ka re e eme. Madirelo a a tswalwa, babereki ba tihoka ditiro, ditlhwatlhwa tsa dilwana di ile godimo le botshelo jwa babereki bo ile kwa tlase. Tsotlhe tse, e setse e le mathata a a nnetseng ruri le mo mafatsheng a bokonatedi a a humileng tota.

Bokonatedi bo setse bo le mo tseleng e e kgokologang, ebile e le matsoketsoke. Morago ga lobaka go

a palamela, go tloge go kgokologe gape.

Ka 1983, itsholelo ya Amerika (USA) e simolotse go tihatloga. Ka gore lefatshe le, le le tona ebile le na le itsholelo e e tiileng, tihatlogo e, e dirile gore itsholelo ya mafatshe a mangwe a bokonatedi e 'lhatloge.

Mo Afrika Borwa le gone, go setse go bonala gore itsholelo e simolola go tihatloga. Thobo mo madirelong ka 1984 e solofetswe go oketsega ka 3%.

Le fa go ntse jalo, koketso e tla bo e se kalokalo. Fa tlhwatlhwa ya gauta (gold) e nna e le kwa tlase, tlhwatlhwa ya thobo mo meepong e tla ema felo go le gongwe kana e fokotsega.

Thobo ya madirelo a dilwana (manufacturing) e tshwanetse go oketsega ka 10%. Koketso e, e latela phokotsego e e kana ka 10% fa gare ga 1982 le 1983 fa bahiri ba neng ba fokotsa tiro ya mmereki a le mongwe mo ditirong tsa babereki ba le 17 mo madirelong a dilwana go leka go dira merokotso (profits).

Potso e tona ke gore, a bahiri ba tla dirisa madi a bone go godisa madirelo le go reka mechina (machines) e mesa e e botoka? Re akanya gore ga ba na go dira jalo.

Maatla a babereki a dirile khumo e ntsi, diketekete tsa madi, a di tsenya mo diatleng tsa bakonatedi. Tsamaiso e, ya tsietso e ntse jalo.

Bogologolo bakonatedi ba ne ba dirisa khumo e go godisa madirelo le go dira ditiro tse di sa; ka moo ba ne ba oketsa thata le khumo ya bone mabapi le go gola ga thobo mo itsholelong yotlhe.

Thata ya tsamaiso ya bokonatedi e ne e ipeile mo tseleng e, le fa babereki ba ne ba sotlega mo khumanegong.

Gompieno bakonatedi ga ba kgone go tsenya madi a bone mo madirelong ka gobo tsamaiso ya bone e tsile bokhutlong. Tsamaiso e, e lwala bolwetse jo bo sa alafiwe.

Le mo lefatsheng le le tona la Amerika tota, go gola ga itsholelo mo go solofetsweng go tla tla bokhutlong mo bofelong jwa 1984 kana 1985. Moo go tla gogela itsholelo ya mafatshe a mangwe kwa tlase le one. Bahiri ba ka se tlhole ba kgona go godisa

thobo mo madirelong kwa ntle ga gore tlhwatlhwa ya dilwana e oketsege ebile e solofetsa go diga tsamaiso yotlhe ya bokonatedi.

Le fa go ntse jalo, go wa ga itsholelo gangwe le gape mo go sa go solofetsa go tlisa mathata a itsholelo a a tshwanang le a Matona a 1929-1933.

Mo Afrika Borwa, ka nako ya mathata a itsholelo, bahiri ba ne ba sa dirise madi a bone mo kgwebong ya madirelo. Ba ne ba dirisa merokotso ya bone go reka madirelo a mangwe le go reka matlo le go tshamekisa madi mo theko le thekiso ya madirelo (stock market) le go romela madi kwa moseja.

Gotlhe mo, go ne ga duelwa ke babereki, ka go tlhoka ditiro le go nnela ruri mo khumanegong. Gompieno sephato sa batho ba bantsho ba nna mo khumanegong e e fiteletseng.

Jaamong, jaaka nako e ntsha ya go gola ga itsholelo e simologa, go bonala gore bahiri ga ba na go dirisa madi a bone ka bontsi mo madirelong. Ba tla dirisa madirelo a a leng teng a a ntseng a sa dirisiwe.

Ba tla bona go sa tlhokafale go dirisa madi mo madirelong a masa ka gobo ba itse gore go wa ga itsholelo go etla, gongwe ka 1985. Ga ba batle go nna le koketso ya madirelo le didirisiwa tse ba itseng gore ga ba kake ba di dirisa go dira merokotso.

Ka moo, ba tla nna ba batla tsela e e ka ba thusang go dira merokotso ka bonako, mo go tshwanang le theko le thekiso matlo le dilo tse dingwe. Ba tla fetonga dinwa-madi tsa Afrika Borwa jaaka dikgofa ba ntse ba palelwa ke go aga madirelo a a ka dirang khumo ya lefatshe.

Moo, go tshwanetse ga utlwisisiwa ke mmereki mongwe le mongwe yo o mo makgotleng a babereki.

Le fa koketso ya itsholelo e tsile gonna khutshwane le bokowa, e ka thusa makgotla a babereki.

Koketsonyana ya thobo mo madirelong e tsholetsa tshepo ya babereki, e bo e ba dira gore ba batle dituelo tse di kwa godimo le go batla ditshwanelo tse dingwe ba sa tshoge go kubiwa mo tirong.

Fa theko ya dilwana e oketsega, bahiri ga ba na go dia nako ya go dira

dilwana. Babereki ba ka dirisa nako eo go bona tse di neng tsa ba latlhegela nako ya itsholelo e le kwa tlase.

Sekai e setse e le se se neng sa diragala kwa madirelong a Ford's Struandale fa babereki ba ne ba ngala tiro pele ga Keresemuse.

Makgotla a babereki a tla bo a le mo seemong se se siameng go dirisa koketso ya itsholelo fa a ka bonako mo Lekgotleng le Letona (Federation).

Ngwaga wa 1984 o tla tlisa nako entsha mo makgotleng a babereki go oketsa maloko ko go 1 million, ka go batla maloko a masha, go lwela gore go nne le dituelo tse di dumetsweng mo lefatsheng lotlhe (minimum wage) le gore babereki botlhe ba ba tlhokang ditiro ba fiwe madi a go itshedisa.

Mme gape re tshwanetse go dirisa ngwaga wa 1984 go tsholetsa kutlwisiso ya babereki botlhe ka ga mokgwa wa tsamaiso ya bokonatedi le tsela e e tlhokegang go fetsa mathatha a lefatshe lotlhe.

Go gola ga itsholelo ya bokonatedi ga gona go fetsa mathatha a go tlhoka ditiro, khumanego, go tlhoka bodulo le tlala. Seemo se tla gola se nna maswe mo bontsing jwa batho.

Gongwe e tlare morago ga dingwaga tse pedi go tla nna le mathatha a itsholelo, a oketsa tshotlego ya babereki.

Tiro e tona e e lebaganeng le babereki ke go ntsha Afrika Borwa mo mathateng a. Mo go ka dirwa jang?

* Ka go aga mokgatlo o le mongwe wa babereki.

* Ka go rotloetsa babereki ba bangwe go aga le go etelela United Democratic Front, le

* go ipaakanyetsa go ntsha puso ya kgatelelo ya batho ka letso le mmala, re batla puso ya babereki ka babereki, le gore go tsewe dilo tse di tshwanang le meepo, madirelo, temo le tsa madi, di bo di tsenngwa mo diatleng tsa babereki bothle.

UMNOTHO NGO1984: Yini okungalindelwa abasebenzi



Ngo 1983, umbuso wabaqashi eNingizimu Afrika ubonise ukuhluleka okukhulu okudlula eminyakeni eminingi engaphambili. Uma izibalo zokwenziwa kwezinto nemali zivela, zilindelwe ukuthi zitshengise ukwehla okungafika kumapesenti angu4 uma ziqathaniswa nezibalo zika1982.

Yingxenywe kuphela yalokhu evezwe ukwesweleka kwemvula. Isizathu esisemqoka ukuthi umbuso wabaqashi emhlabeni jikelele ubusengxakini — nokuthi izindawo zemisebenzi namafektri aseNingizimu Afrika ayehluleka ekubangisaneni nezindawo zokusebenza namafektri amakhulu amazwe anothile aphesheya. Aselokhu asalela emuva.

Ngemuva kwempi yesibili yomhlaba (ngenxa yezizathu ezuchazwe encwadini uMzabalazo waBasebenzi ozayo eNingizimu Afrika) umbuso wabaqashi wavuthela phezulu njengomentshisi waletha ukukhanya eminyakeni engafika kumashumi amathatu. Kodwa namhlanje lelilangabi liyacima.

Ngalesosikhathi ukuthengiselana emhlabeni kwakulokhu kukhula ngamapesenti adlula u12 ngonyaka. Eminyakeni emithathu edlule, ukuthengiselana emhlabeni kunciphile, noma kungathwi akusaphumeleli. Ukuvalwa kwamafektri, ukuphelelwa yimisebenzi, ukukhuphuka kokubiza kwezinto, kanye nokwehla kwempilo okuvelela abasebenzi izinto ezikhona ulomphelo nasemazweni abaqashi anotho kakhulu.

Umbuso wabaqashi usemgwaqweni owehlelayo—kodwa lomgwaqo awushileli. Ngemuva kwesiceshana eshlelayo kuphinda kukhuphukele... ngaphambi kokuthi emva kwalokho bese kwehlela futhi.

Enyakeni ka 1983, izwe laseMelika (USA) laqalisa ukukhuphukela.

Ngenxa yobukhulu namandla omnotho walelizwe, likwazi ukudonsa amanye amazwe abaqashi emhlabeni emva kwalo.

NaseNingizimu Afrika kukhombisa ngathi ukukhuphukela kuyaqala. Ukukhula komnotho kulindelwe ukuthi kuyephezulu ngamapesenti angaba u3.

Kodwa lokukukhuphukela kuzoba lapha-nalaphaya. Uma ukubiza kwegolide kungalokhu kuphansi esikhathini esizayo, imali evezwa ukusebenza ezimayini izolokhu iphansi, futhi kungenzeka yehle.

Kodwa kusenjalo, ukusebenza emafektrini kufanele ukuya phezulu ngamapesenti angaba u10. Lokhu kulandela ukwehla kokusebenza okungafika kumapesenti angaba u10 phakathi kuka1982 no 1983, ngenkathi abaqashi bevala umsebenzi umunye kuyeyishumi nesikhombisa emafektrini benzela ukuvikela imivuzo yemali yabo.

Umbuzo omkhulu wukuthi abaqashi bazofaka imali ekukhuliseni amafektri, beletha imishini emisha nengcono, kanjalo, ngokubona-kalayo. Sicabanga ukuthi angeke benze njalo.

Amandla okusebenza abasebenzi alethe ingcebo enhle, izigidigidi zamarandi, azibeka ezandleni zabaqashi. Yikho konke lokhu umbuso wokugebenga abasebenzi ungakho.

Esikhathini esesidlule, abaqashi babesebenzisa ingxenywe ebonakalayo yalomcebo ekukhuliseni amafektri, ekwakheni imisebenzi emisha, ngalokhu bongeza amandla nobucebi babo. Lokhu bekuhambisana nokukhula kokusebenza nokwenziwa kwezinto ezweni lonke.

Yilokhu okwakuqinisa umbuso wabaqashi, nomangabe abasebenzi bona babesolokhu behlupheka bebulawa indlala.

Kodwa manje, abaqashi abasakwazi ukufaka imali elingene

ekukhuliseni imisebenzi nokwenziwa kwezinto—ngoba umbuso wabo ufike ekupheleni kwendlela emhlabeni jikelele. Namhlanje lombuso uphethene nokugula obungeke bulwasheke.

Na kulo iqhawe eliyiMelika, ukukhula komnotho ezweni okukhona namhlanje kulindelwe ukuthi kufike ekupheleni enyakeni ka1984 noma ngonyaka ka 1985 uma kuthathe isikhathi. Ngalokhu IMelika izophinda idonsele phansi amanye amazwe abaqashi emhlabeni emuva kwayo. Abaqashi abasakwazi ukuphikelela bongeza ukusebenza nokwenziwa kwezinto ngaphandle kokuthi ukubiza kwalezinto nako kuye phezulu. Lokhu kuletha uvalo lokuthi umbuso wonke wabaqashi uzobhidlika.

Kusenjalo nje, uma ukusebenza, ukwenziwa kwezinto nomnotho kwehlela phansi, lokhu kuletha uvalo lokuthi nakhona umbuso usengabhidlika njengasesikhathini sika1929 kuya ku1933, isikhathi sengxaki enkulu (Great Depression).

ENingizimu Afrika, ngesikhathi sengxaki edlule, abaqashi bafulathela ukukhulisa ukusebenza ngokufaka imali babhekana nokuthi imivuzo yemali yabo bayisebenzisele ukuthenga izinkampani, begembula lapho kuthengiswa khona izinkampani, enye beyithumela phesheya, njalo njalo.

Ngenxa yako-konke lokhu, abasebenzi bafanela ukubhadala ngokuxoshwa emisebenzini nangendlala ebasezekayo. Namhlanje iningi labantu abamnyama ezweni bahlala "endlaleni ephelile nje."

Okwamanje, njengoba isikhathi sokukhula kokusebenza nokwenziwa kwezinto siqala, akutshengisi ukuthi abaqashi bazokhulisa imisebenzi ngokufaka imali eningi. Bazoqala ngokusebenzisa izikhala ezikhona emzefektrini ebezilele zinga-

setshenziwa.

Angeke babone isizathu sokukhulisa ukusebenza ngokufaka imali ngoba babona ukuthi izingxaki ezintsha ezizokwehlisa umnotho ziyeza, zingafika ngonyaka ka1985. Abafuni ukuthi bazohlala ngezikhala ezinkudlwana bengakwazi ukuzisebenzisa ekutholeni umvuzo wemali.

Ngakho-ke, bazelokhu bedlalisa imali bezama ukuthola imivuzo ngokushesha. Njengezimbungulu, bazoncela igazi leNingizimu Afrika, belokhu bekhubaza futhi behluleka ukusebenzisa umcebo okhona ekwakheni imisebenzi nasekukhuliseni umnotho wezwe.

Lokhu kufanele kungene ezingondweni zabo bonke abasebenzi abazibumbe emibuthweni yabasebenzi.

Nomangabe kubonakala ngathi ukukhula komnotho kuzoba kuncane futhi bube bufishane, kodwa kusengalethela umzabalazo wabasebenzi imivuzo esemqoka.

Ukongezeka kwemisebenzi, noma kukuncane kuletha ukuqiniseka nethemba ebasebenzini, kubabeke esimeni esingconywa sokufuna ukubhadalwa okuphezudlana nezinye izinto emisebenzini, ngapha dle kokuletha ingozi enkulu yokuxoshwa.

Uma ukudingeka kwezinto kuya

phezulu, abaqashi bazobheka ekuthini bangalahlekelwa isikhathi sokwakha izinto. Abasebenzi bangasebenzisa lesimo ukuze bathole konke okubalahlekele ngenkathi umnotho ezweni ubusengxakini.

Ukubangcono kwesimo emafektrini ezimoto kuzibonakalise ngokumiswa kwemisebenzi ngaphambi kukaKhisimusi efektrini yase Ford's Struandale.

Umzabalazo wemibutho yabasebenzi uzoba esimeni esingcono sokusebenzisa ithuba lokuya phezulu komnotho uma ukwazi ukubumba nokuhlenganisa imibutho yabasebenzi yonke ezweni ngaphansi komkhandlo owodwa ngaphandle kokumosha isikhathi.

Unyaka ka1984 futhi uzoletsa izindlela ezintsha zokukhuphulela kwisigidi amalungu emibuthweni yabasebenzi—lokhu kungenzeka ngokuzimisela ukuletha amalungu amasha emibuthweni nangokubumba impi yokufuna ukubhadalwa okulingene ezweni lonke, ngokulwela imfanelo yokuthola imali elingene yibo bonke abangatholi msebenzi, nezinye izimfanelo.

Kodwa futhi kufanele sisebenzise unyaka ka1984 ukuchazela kahle bonke abasebenzi ukuthi umbuso wabaqashi usebenza kanjani, nokuthi ukuze izinkinga zalombuso ziqha-

qhwe, kufanele kwenziwe njani.

Ukukhuphuka komnotho ngaphansi kombuso wabaqashi angeke kuqale ukuphela kokungabikho kwemisebenzi, kuqede indlala, kuqede ukungabikho kwezindlu noma kuphelise ukulamba. Isimo esibi abantu abaningi abakuso sizoqhubekela phambili.

Kubonakala ngathi eminyakeni emibili ezayo kuzobuye kube nezinye izingxaki ezivelela umbuso wabaqashi. Lokhu kuzongeza imithwalo ezima esemahlombe abasebenzi.

Umsebenzi olele phambi kwabasebenzayo ukuthi bakhokhele iNingizimu Afrika bayikhiphe esimeni esibi kakhulu ekuso. Lomsebenzi ungafezwa kanjani?

* Ngokwakha umzabalazo obumbene wemibutho yabasebenzi;

* Ngokuletha abasebenzi bakithi emibuthweni ukuthi bakwazi ukwakha nokukhokhela iUnited Democratic Front;

* Ngaphezu kwako-konke, ngokuveza nangokucacisa indlela ekhanyayo yokuketula uhulumende wobandlululo ngombala, indlela yokwakha uhulumende wezimfanelo zabasebenzi, nendlela okungathathwa ngayo izindawo zokusebenza nokwakha izinto njenge izimayini, amafektri, amapulazi kanye nezindawo zemali ukuze konke lokhu kube sezandleni zabasebenzi.

DIE EKONOMIE IN 1984: Wat kan werkers verwag?

In 1983 het kapitalisme in Suid-Afrika sy ergste resultate in baie jare behaal. Wanneer die jaar se produksiesyfers uitkom, word verwag dat hulle omtrent 4% laer as in 1982 sal wees.

Dit was maar gedeeltelik 'n gevolg van die droogte. Die belangrikste rede was die krisis wat die

wêreldkapitalisme as geheel geraak het—plus die feit dat die Suid-Afrikaanse industrie nie kan kompeteer met die reusagtige monopolie-onderneminge in die ontwikkelde lande nie, en verder en verder agter raak.

Na die Tweede Wêreldoorlog het kapitalisme (om redes wat ons ver-

duidelik het in *South Africa's Impending Socialist Revolution*) vlam gevat en helder gebrand vir byna 30 jaar lank. Nou brand die vlam al hoe laer.

Toe het die wêreldhandel aanhoudend gegroei met meer as 12% per jaar. Die afgelope drie jaar het die wêreldhandel egter gekrimp of stilgestaan. Fabrieksluitinge,

stygende pryse en dalende lewensstandaarde vir werkende mense het permanent geword selfs in die rykste kapitalistiese lande.

Die sisteem is op 'n afdraande pad—maar die pad is ongelyk. Na elke stuk afdraande is daar 'n kort opdraande... voordat dit weer afdraand gaan!

Gedurende 1983 het die ekonomie van die Verenigde State van Amerika begin herstel. As gevolg van sy grootte en krag, trek hy die res van die kapitalistiese wêreld gedeeltelik met hom saam.

Ook in Suid-Afrika is daar tekens van herstel. Dit word verwag dat produksie in 1984 met ongeveer 3% sal toeneem.

Die groei sal egter ongelyk wees. As die goudprys nog 'n tyd lank laag bly, sal die waarde van minerale produksie stagneer of selfs agteruitgaan.

Nywerheidsproduksie, aan die ander kant, sal waarskynlik met ongeveer 10% toeneem. Dit kom na 'n afname van ongeveer 10% tussen 1982 en 1983, toe die base die werk van een in elke sewentien werkers afgeskaf het om hulle winste te behou.

Die groot vraag is of die base nou op enige betekenisvolle skaal geld gaan belê om die fabriek uit te brei, om nuwe en beter masjienerie aan te skaf, ens. Ons dink nie so nie.

Die arbeid van die werkende klas het fabelagtige rykdom, multi-miljoene rande, in die kapitalistiese hande geplaas. Dis die hele punt van die uitbuitingsisteem.

In die verlede het die kapitaliste 'n groot deel van hierdie rykdom gebruik om nywerhede uit te brei, om nuwe werk te skep, en op die manier hul mag en rykdom uit te brei saam met die groei van produksie in die hele ekonomie.

Dit was die grondslag vir die krag van die kapitalistiese sisteem, selfs al moes die werkers in armoede ly.

Nou kan die kapitaliste egter nie meer op groot skaal in produksie belê nie—omdat hulle sisteem sy grense die wêreld deur bereik het. Nou ly dit aan 'n ongeneeslike siekte.

Selfs in die magtige VSA word verwag dat die teenwoordige ekonomiese herstel gedurende 1984, of uiterlik 1985, sal eindig. Dit sal weer die res van die kapitalistiese lande

saamsleep. Die base kan nie meer aanhou om produksie uit te brei sonder dat inflasie (prysstyginge) weer opskiet en die hele sisteem met ineenstorting bedreig nie.

Terselfdertyd dreig elke ekonomiese afname om 'n ineenstorting soos tydens die Groot Depressie van 1929-33 te veroorsaak.

In Suid-Afrika het die base gedurende die afgelope resessie weggedraai van nuwe belegginge, en in plaas daarvan hul winste gebruik om ander maatskappye op te koop, om met eiendom te spekuleer, op die aandelemark te dobbel, geld oorsee te stuur, ens.

Hiervoor moes die werkersklas betaal in die vorm van werkloosheid en verergerende armoede. Ten minste die helfte van die swart bevolking lewe vandag in "absolute armoede".

Nou dat 'n nuwe tydperk van uitbreiding begin, is dit hoogs onwaarskynlik dat die base baie sal belê. Hulle sal begin deur die bestaande kapasiteit van die fabriek, wat stil gele het, te gebruik.

Hulle sal baie skrikkerig wees om meer te belê, omdat hulle weet dat daar weer 'n resessie sal kom, waarskynlik in 1985, en hulle wil nie bly sit met nog duurder kapasiteit wat hulle nie kan gebruik om wins mee te maak nie.

Daarom sal hulle aanhou om vin-nige winste te soek deur finansiële slae te slaan en deur spekulasie. Soos luse sal hulle die bloed van Suid-Afrika suig, sonder om die kapasiteit van die ekonomie om regte rykdom te produseer, op te bou, en deur dit inderdaad te verswak.

Dit moet deel word van die begrip van elke georganiseerde werker.

Selfs al sal die nuwe ekonomiese herstel waarskynlik swak en kort wees, kan dit belangrike voordele vir die werkersbeweging bring.

Selfs 'n klein toename in die produksie versterk die selfvertroue van die werkers, en plaas hulle in 'n beter posisie om hoër lone en ander verbeteringe te eis, sonder dieselfde gevaar om ontslaan te word.

Deurdat die aanvraag vir produkte toeneem, sal die base versigtig wees om geen produksietyd te verloor nie. Werkers kan die kans gebruik om terug te wen wat hulle gedurende die resessie verloor het.

inqaba YA BASEBENZI

Alreeds is die verandering in die situasie in die motorindustrie aangedui deur die staking voor Kersfees in die Fordfabriek by Struandale.

Die werkersbeweging sal in 'n goeie posisie wees om volle voordeel uit die ekonomiese herstel te trek—as dit sonder versuim verenig om nasionale industriële bonde te vorm binne 'n enkele federasie.

1984 sal ook nuwe kanse bied om die werkersbeweging op te bou tot tenminste 'n miljoen lede—deur 'n groot rekruteringsveldtog, en 'n verenigde kampanje om 'n nasionale minimumloon, permanente werkloosheids-voordele vir alle werkers, en ander basiese eise.

Maar ons moet 1984 ook gebruik om die begrip van alle werkers van die aard van die kapitalistiese sisteem te verdiep, en van wat nodig is om die probleme van die samelewing op te los.

Die ekonomiese herstel van die kapitalisme sal nie eers begin om die werkloosheid, armoede, woningtekort en hongersnood op te los nie. Toestande sal erger bly word onder die massa van die bevolking.

Waarskynlik binne twee jaar sal daar weer 'n skerp ekonomiese krisis wees, wat die laste op die werkers se skouers sal vermenigvuldig.

Die taak lê voor die werkende klas om Suid-Afrika uit hierdie verskriklike situasie te lei. Hoe kan hierdie taak aangepak word?

* Deur 'n verenigde vakbonds-beweging op te bou;

* Deur ons medewerkers te organiseer om die UDF op te bou en te lei;

* Bowenal, deur 'n duidelike program te ontwikkel vir die omverwerping van die apartheidstaat, vir 'n demokratiese regering van die werkers, en oorname van die groot produksiekragte in die mynbou, nywerheid, landbou en finansie in die hande van die werkende klas.

Workers' power crisis of

Nimrod Sejake was, from 1954, organiser for and then secretary of the Transvaal Iron, Steel and Metal Workers Union, which affiliated to SACTU.

According to SACTU's official history, 'Organise or Starve!' (page 181):

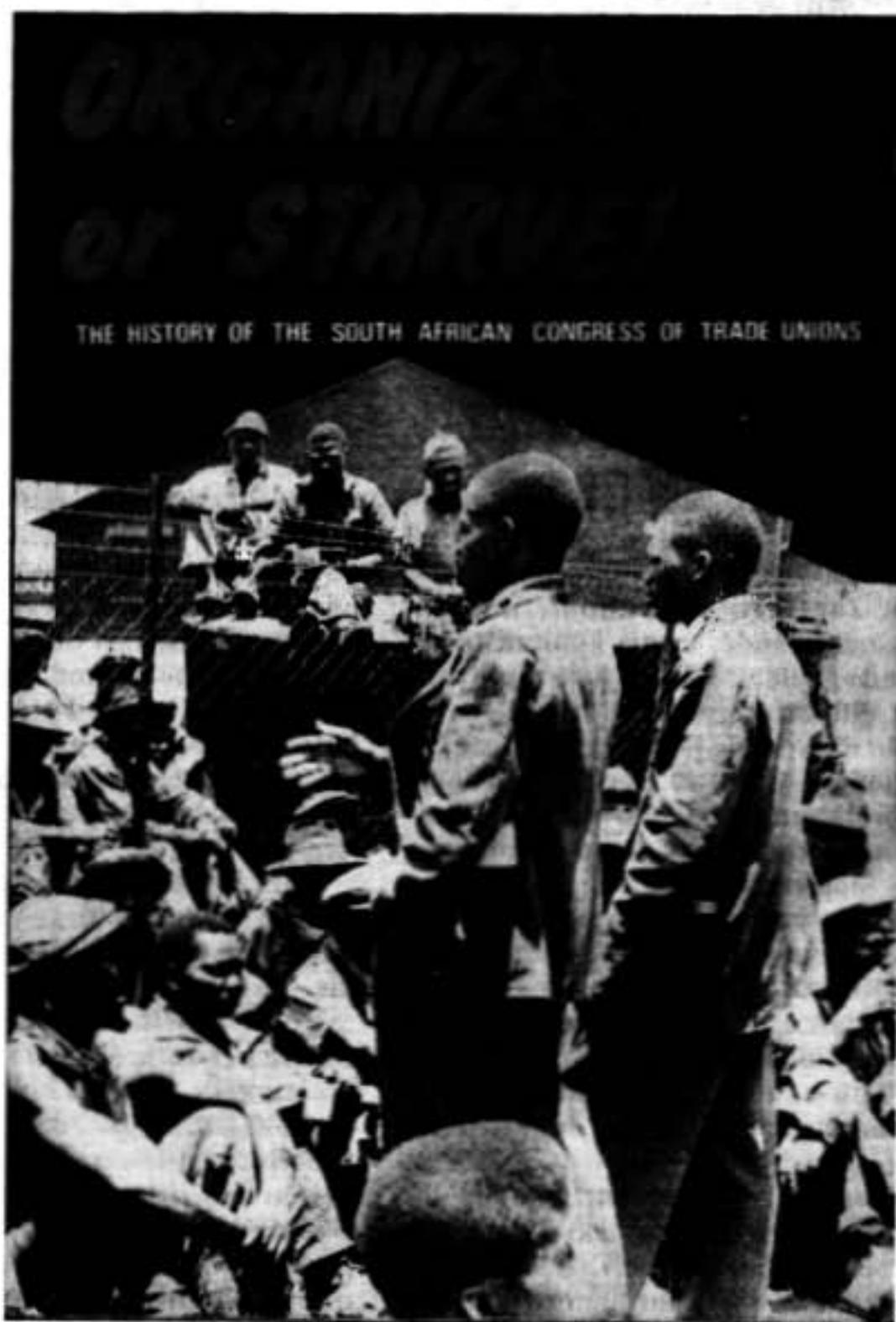
"At the time of SACTU's formation, the Tvl IS&MWU was the only viable trade union for African metal workers... The Transvaal union supported a number of strikes throughout 1955; between April and September of that year workers at African Lamps, Thermo Welding, African Pressing and Diecasting, Wickmans and Phoenix Foundry engaged in strike action against their conditions of exploitation. At Prima Steel in Benoni also, improvements had been won as a result of the militant actions taken by these East Rand workers.

"During the strike at African Lamps, Industria, the Union organizer Nimrod Sejake was arrested and charged with illegally striking along with another 78 workers. Sejake was fined £10 for inciting an illegal strike and the other workers later won an appeal against their fines of £3 each. The workers also won a 1d. per hour increase from their bosses.

"Sejake himself had been recruited by the veteran J. B. Marks and given the gigantic task of organising iron and steel workers prior to 1955. He became one of SACTU's most militant organizers, rousing the low-paid Black metal workers to take frequent strike action."

Comrade Sejake, also secretary of the ANC Jabavu branch, was one of 156 Congress Alliance leaders arrested in 1956 on charges of treason.

Here he speaks about some of his experiences and the lessons for the workers' struggle today.



The cover of SACTU's history shows union organizers Nimrod Sejake (left) and John Nkadimeng (now SACTU General Secretary) addressing metal workers in 1955.

and the leadership

By
Nimrod Sejake

It was from my organising work on the Reef that I came to see the enormous power of the working class.

During those days African trade unions were not recognised and strikes by African workers were illegal. But this was no barrier to the workers, if they were properly organised.

Our motto in the Iron and Steel Union was that we should never go to an employer with our demands unless we know our power, and that power was to be found only when the workers were fully organised with an understanding of how to go about a strike.

Then they can beat the employers in their own field. Even though there are laws which are barriers, the workers break them, and with intent. Even if the police are called in they cannot put into effect their powers because the workers can make their powers ineffective.

Through our union experience we understood that only when you face the employers from a position of strength can you change society in SA. And, if this was done all over the country, with a clear sense of direction, no power can impede the forward march of the working class.

White workers

There is an important thing that we learned in the Iron and Steel Union. We said to the black workers when they went on strike to talk with white workers and tell them why we are

striking.

They should explain that we are underpaid, discriminated against as a nation and oppressed as a class. The laws dehumanise us, and make us mere chattels in society.

Look, we would say to the white workers, you have the law on your side, you have people you elect to go to parliament to legislate, and they legislate against us. You do skilled work, but according to the law we are not allowed to do it.

Our struggle is not only about wages, but it is a political question. We want to destroy the laws in this country, to make it fit for workers of all races. And we are showing today that we can stop this factory. We said this, for example, in the strikes at African Lamps and at Phoenix Foundry.

"As you can see," the African workers said to the white workers, "we stopped management from doing anything. We are the bosses today. You can see you are being told to go home and not work precisely because of our power. We can make you redundant"—this is the word the workers used.

We were aware that the racist regime gets a great deal of support from white workers. But we wanted to break down this granite wall. We were saying to the white workers, look, we want to show you we can penetrate the barriers put before us, we can pull them down and make the laws ineffective.

As a result, during these strikes, some white workers began to say: "Look, if you succeed, we are going to succeed as well". Many of them voiced the correct view that there is really no difference between black labour and white labour; we should all be striking for workers' rights.

White workers say this behind closed doors because they know the repercussions.

As far as my experiences show, the social support the regime is enjoying from the white workers can be broken if the African workers are strongly organised along the correct lines.

ISCOR

Often what the state and the employers think is impossible is made possible by the working class! Let me give the example of huge concerns like ISCOR. It was said in the 1950s to be impossible to enter ISCOR, because it was always guarded. These large state concerns are guarded precisely because if the workers could get a grip on them and stop production, the capitalists would be greatly affected.

But that impossibility was again proved by the workers to be a paper tiger. Through the workers I entered ISCOR in Van der Bijl Park. I organised the workers there first, not by going to the factory, but by going to their homes. Through them the other workers could be brought into the movement.

Another strategy was making feasts or tea parties in the locations—where we would meet and discuss.

Through that I organised to go in and distribute leaflets. It is such a huge concern that you would not know which side of it you entered and which side you came out, unless you were led by the people working there.

So I took leaflets in a suitcase from

Jo'burg. At the bus stop a worker was there to guide me. Inside the plant the workers showed me where we could unpack the bundles of leaflets. Before I knew it, other workers were placing them in vantage points for workers coming in on the next shift to find them.

Then, when they knew the bus was about to leave, they led me out to it and I left the place.

Here again the mighty power of the working class demonstrates itself. Not only is it a power as far as stopping work is concerned, but because the understanding, the creativity, the grasp of strategy and tactics of the workers is so powerful, once they are properly organised there is nothing to fear in SA.

In fact anywhere in the world that the workers are properly organised with an understanding of their tasks, they have nothing to fear.

So all these and many other experiences convinced me that through the power of the working class it is possible to bring SA to a standstill, and overthrow that powerful regime.

What we have to do first is to organise the workers. Then we shall be facing battle from a position of power, where we can tell the employers there are two things existing here—you own the means of production, but we own the labour-power, and if we don't agree, we fold our hands and your industry will be paralysed.

I came to see that the power of the working class was so enormous that even if you compared it with the police, the army, the air force, the prisons and magistrates court and judges, etc.—that all the power cannot stand in the way of the struggle of the working class to overthrow the state. The power lies in the working class, if it is organised and given a direction, and that direction can only be found in Marxism.

Marxism

Marxism is a scientific theory, based on the experience of the working class. That is why for the workers Marxism is easily accepted, because their experiences prove it—their hard lives, cruel oppression, brutal handling in the factory, in the locations, at home—with low wages, high rents and high prices.

From this angle the workers understand theory. And when revolution comes they grasp in a day what would otherwise take years to grasp.

In the Iron and Steel Union we used to say that the very thing that is called law in SA is illegal, that there is no "law" as far as Africans were concerned, because the majority of the people take no part in making it, but it is made by the capitalists to oppress the workers.

The only answer to that is for the workers to organise to take political power into their own hands with the specific aim of ending capitalism and achieving socialism.

This is what *Inqaba* is saying: the workers must build the trade unions and transform the ANC. I support this view up to the hilt.

Because in the 1950s I already found, unfortunately, that this was not the position taken by the leadership of SACTU, or of the ANC, or of the South African Communist Party.

They did not have confidence in the power of the working class.

As an example, I will mention a time when I had organised nine metal factories along the Rand, with the aim that when the workers came out on strike, they would all come out simultaneously.

When they were all organised and ready I went to the SACTU leadership to make sure of their support for the action. There would be a lightn-

ing strike spreading along the Rand—and factories where the workers had experience of strike action like African lamps, Phoenix Foundry and Benoni Foundry were ready to come out in support.

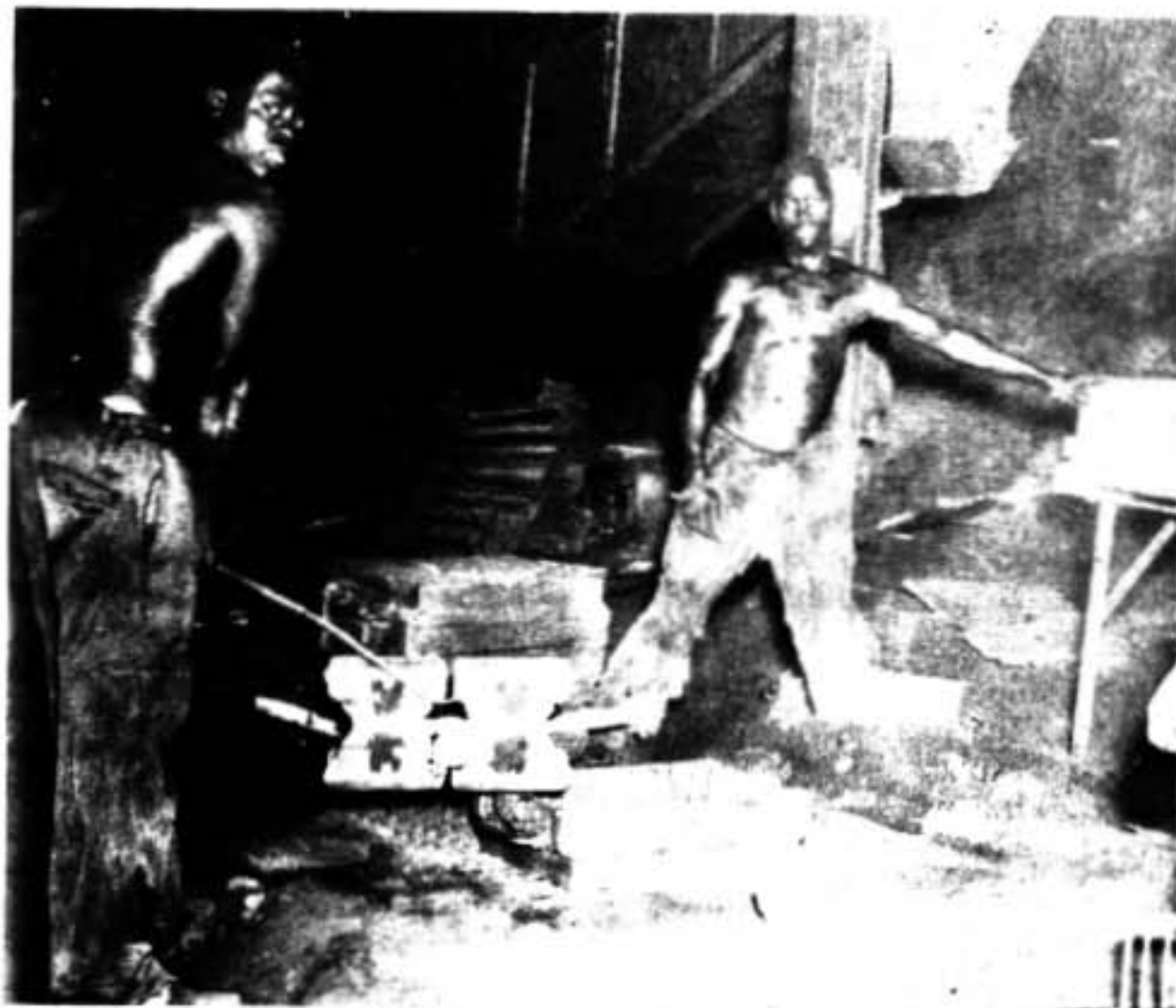
In Iron and Steel we saw this as a great step forward for the trade union movement. But the SACTU leaders told me (and I am quoting them): "Nimrod, that is too much!"

Or, again, there was the time in 1958 when the ANC called off a tremendous national 3-day strike on the first day! Called it off! I remember buying a newspaper and seeing the headline: "*Secretary-General of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, calls off strike.*"

I was furious. Because, at that time, we were on bail from the Treason Trial, and one of the conditions was that we did not attend meetings or organise in any way. But, nevertheless, we had risked organising the workers to make the strike a success.

Crisis of leadership

The leadership of the movement was lagging far behind, out of touch with developments. This is why I support *Inqaba* because the present situation requires a journal like this which puts forward clearly the man-



Metal workers in the 1950s

ner in which the struggle in SA must be handled.

We lacked that in the 1950s.

Inqaba puts forward a theory and a strategy which can guide the working-class movement in the struggle for power—something the ANC leadership has not done—something which we can say the South African Communist Party has **failed** to do. I say "failed" because time and again it has been advised by workers to change its methods and has failed to do so.

The Communist Party leaders still refuse to put forward that the task of the working class will be to take power in the revolution that is coming in South Africa.

These leaders have put forward the position that we must struggle for a bourgeois democracy in SA—and the SACP has said over and over again that we must wait until getting that before struggling to overthrow capitalism.

Workers want democratic rights of course. When in Europe I see I can stand right next to a policeman and sell a socialist newspaper, and he doesn't turn a hair, it amazes me.

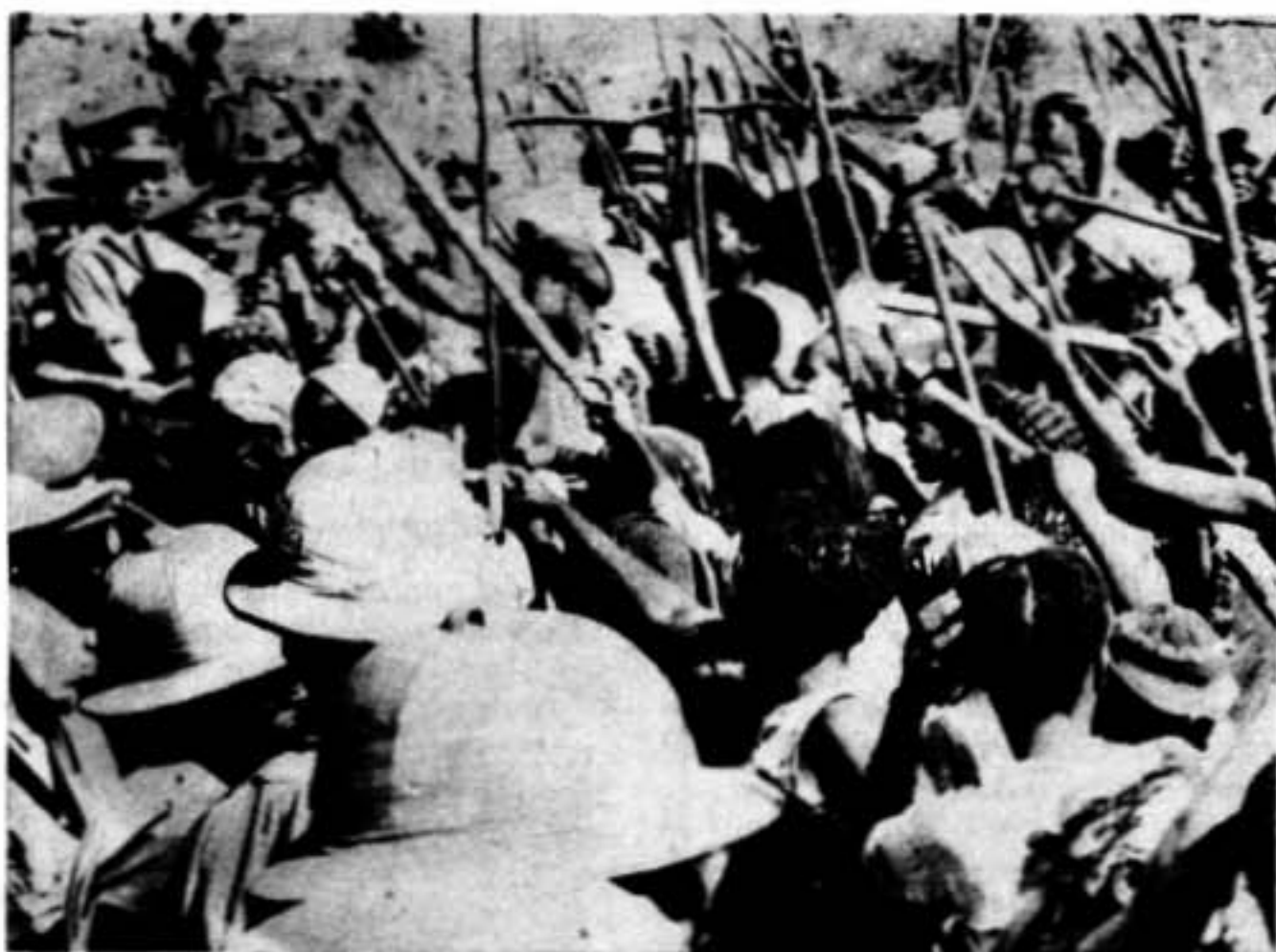
The workers in Europe have struggled for and won those rights—although the capitalists are now trying to whittle them away. And I think: "If the workers in SA had those rights just for a month, or even 24 hours, what they would begin to do with them."

But the point is: it will take a revolution in South Africa—a revolution made by the power of the working class—to achieve full democratic rights. And I ask: when the workers in SA push back the state to that point, why should they stop there?

Why should they stop just because their leaders are then scrambling for positions in the bosses' parliament? The workers will then have the power to take over the factories and mines and so on, and to take on and destroy the bosses' state. That is what they will demand that their leaders carry through.

I came to the conclusion in the 1950s that we were faced with a crisis of leadership. Subsequently I have discovered that the reasons for this crisis were explained by the Russian Marxist, Trotsky.

Trotsky had already explained that in Russia the basic problems of the masses could not be solved unless the working class took power. It is the same in SA—race discrimination



Working-class women in action, Cato Manor, 1959

even cannot be ended short of that. It was proved in Russia when the working class came to power in 1917 under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, headed by Lenin and Trotsky.

Later Trotsky also explained how the workers' democracy which came into existence in the Soviet Union was crushed by the coming to power of Stalin and the bureaucracy—how this led to the degeneration of the workers' state and the degeneration of the Communist International, so that Communist Parties no longer stood for the interests of the working class internationally.

Today it is more clear than ever that the working class can change society, **if it is organised with the correct policy and leadership.**

The concept is held by people outside SA and even in SA that the regime cannot be conquered. But the working class is proving today that it can remove it: soften it up first and then destroy it. This is happening through the workers, not through the so-called "armed struggle".

Armed struggle

One thing I must make explicitly clear. You can change nothing in space outside the influence of force. You can't move anything say, from this table to that table, unless you use force.

To change society from one state

to another like we want to do in SA; to remove racism and establish democracy, to remove capitalism and build socialism—we need force. And that force in my conviction is in the working class.

It is a question of the workers using force and violence in their proper place. There will come a stage when, to eliminate a highly-armed regime like the SA regime, the workers will have to be ready militarily, trained themselves. That is inevitable. The Russian workers in the October Revolution were not empty-handed—they organised themselves in an armed workers' force.

In anticipation of such a situation, the workers must be prepared. The ruling class must find that they cannot spread their army all over the country, because the workers are organised everywhere.

Then when we are physically attacked in any area of the country we will be able to hit back and they will find they can no longer control us.

In the 1960s the ANC made me 'political commissar' in the camps in Tanzania. My task was to provide political education for the workers there. I call them workers because many of them had been trade unionists and, even though they were militarily trained, they still had the standpoint of the workers, to overthrow the SA regime and capitalism.

I put the position among these comrades that only the working class could overthrow the state because who else could do it in isolation from

the workers. Therefore trained people infiltrated into the country should not start to initiate battles, because they would only be exposing themselves in front of a powerful regular army which would just destroy you if it discovered you.

The proper thing to do, I said, when you enter the country is to organise the workers—and, through them, the masses as a whole—and to explain that only the organised working class had the power to defeat the state. And to prepare, only, for when it would be effective to use arms.

The guerilla methods put forward by the ANC leadership do nothing more than frighten the enemy from time to time.

Later on I have been in China. I have seen the cave in Yen-an which was Mao's home and command centre in the guerilla war in China. The situation in our country is quite different. It is a very industrialised country, where there is no real force of opposition other than the working class.

The method of guerrilla war is not the method of working-class struggle.

After a time in Tanzania the ANC leadership told me that I should no longer teach Marxism. In fact the person who initiated this was none other than the late Moses Kotane, then the General Secretary of the SA Communist Party.

It astounded me when he said we must teach instead the "African image". This is ludicrous. Right back in the *Communist Manifesto* it was explained that "All hitherto existing history is the history of class struggle." Of course national oppression is central in South Africa, but that does not make the struggle against it any less a class struggle.

Because I would not accept the position of the leadership, it was decided to get rid of me. I was removed from the camps, and the Tanzanian government gave me seven days to leave the country!

I heard later that, at the Morogoro conference, ANC comrades asked, "Why did Sejake leave the ANC?", and the leadership said, "He just left... just like that" — which is a thing serious comrades do not believe to this day.

After that I was for a time in the PAC, because the youth there were keen to study Marxism. But the same



Nimrod Sejake speaking in Dublin on 23 January 1984 at a public meeting to protest the plans of the right-wing leadership of the Irish Labour Party to expel Marxist supporters of *Militant Irish Monthly* from the party.

crisis revealed itself: the nationalist leadership felt threatened by working-class ideas, and I was expelled.

When I look back now to the 1950s I see that the major problem was that we, the workers, who supported and built the ANC, did not control it. Even SACTU was under the control of the middle-class ANC leaders, rather than the other way around.

Everywhere the working-class movement has—**must have**—two arms: "an industrial arm and a political arm" as the great Irish Marxist, James Connolly, once said.

Both these arms are necessary. They go together. The one without the other will not succeed.

The workers, on their own account, have rebuilt a powerful trade union movement in our country—more powerful than we ever had in the 1950s. This is a tremendous achievement, even though there is still a long way to go in organising the unorganised workers.

I have been inspired by the workers organised in MAWU, who have taken forward with courage and success the work which we began in the

1950s. I regard myself as a member of MAWU.

These achievements must never be compromised or sacrificed. It is now vital that they are taken forward in creating a new united trade union federation, to strengthen our ability to organise and to use the strike weapon, very intensively, all over the country.

Wherever there is a working concern, a factory, anywhere in the country, there is the revolution—provided the working class is organised and knows its power.

At the same time I agree fully with *Inqaba* when it says that the trade unions should join and play their part in the UDF, **transform the UDF into a mass working-class movement**, able to give a lead to all the oppressed—and to white workers too.

The laws of history work in peculiar ways. In the 1950s, the workers turned to the ANC as the political organisation which they felt it was necessary to support and strengthen. Today we see the response which just the launching of the UDF gained from the unorganised and many others.

"When I look back to the 1950s I see that the major problem was that we, the workers, who supported and built the ANC, did not control it."

This is because workers saw here a sign of the ANC reborn in the country, a sign of the return of nationwide organisation around the Freedom Charter.

It is true that the leadership of the UDF, as was the case with the ANC in the 1950s (and is still the case today), is in the hands of the middle class. But the workers must go into the UDF—and later into the ANC when it returns openly to SA—not to bow down to the leaders' policies, their hesitations and twists and turns, but to **transform** the UDF and **transform** the ANC.

I appeal particularly to the workers in MAWU, the union to which I belong, to press this task on their leaders and on the leaders of FOSATU and all unions.

It is only by the workers going into the UDF, at every level, in an organised and united way, that we can get rid of the influence of the middle-class leadership.

We must simply tell them openly that they must accept the programme of the working class or else it is time they left their positions. There is no problem in that. If the organised working class can take on the big bosses and the state, there is no problem in dealing with individuals who are an obstacle to the movement.

This is in the interests of the majority of the middle class too. Only the working class can liberate them from their oppression by racism and capitalism—by overthrowing the state and taking power. The majority of the middle class will follow a determined lead from the workers.

History will not allow us to postpone this task while we sort out merely our own "trade union affairs". In fact by transforming the UDF we will strengthen the whole workers' movement, the trade unions too.

With the UDF under working-class leadership, campaigning for demands like a national minimum wage, it will win the enthusiastic support of many of the most oppressed who are still unorganised.

On the other hand, if the trade union movement remains divided on the question of the UDF, this can become a barrier to forming the strongest possible trade union unity in action.

But because from my experience I am confident in the power and the understanding of the workers, I am sure we are bound to succeed in

building our two arms: the industrial arm and the political arm.

The success will be so tremendous and vibrant that it will shake the whole of this globe! The SA regime is one of the worst in the world, and if the African working class understand and apply Marxist theory correctly they will give some meat to the working class of the world and gain tremendous support.

I have found that Europe, and the whole of the capitalist West, is no longer what we thought it to be, what it was. Conditions are getting worse, in every country, because of the grip of capitalism. Therefore the workers are struggling against it.

So workers in SA should not look at the West simply as a place from which imperialism exploits them, without anybody struggling to put a stop to this. Struggle is going on!

But I have also found the same crisis of leadership of the workers' movement.

Take Ireland, for example: the Labour Party is in a coalition government with a capitalist party that has nothing in common with the workers. It is like the SACP calling for "an alliance of all classes"—how can workers be in alliance with their bosses?

Or take the example of Britain, where the Labour Party leadership has been trying to expel Marxists. It reminds me of the action taken by the ANC leadership against me.

But I find in these countries a growing enthusiasm for Marxist ideas, especially among the youth and young workers, but among older workers also. Recently I went to a Young Workers' Assembly organised by the British Labour Party Young Socialists, where I heard many youth and others speaking.

Some were real youngsters, even one "small boy" (I use this with no disrespect) whose speech made me feel that at his age I had no idea of struggle. This is because of the change that is taking place in the working class today. In Soweto, too, four-year-old children were confronting the police.

It's the development of a new period in the world. We have reached the stage of the advent of world revolution. I can see this is no longer a theory. It is a reality. I can safely say that world revolution is approaching the doorsteps of the homes where we live and the sooner we wake up to the occasion the better.

INQABA NEEDS CASH!

To step up the campaign for socialist policies in the workers' movement, finance is needed.

The cost of printing *Inqaba* and distributing it is paid for completely out of sales and donations from readers and supporters.

Within South Africa, *Inqaba* supporters should ensure that our journal always changes hands in return for money, no matter how little.

Many demands are made on workers' inadequate pay packets. But for an independent workers' press to develop, it must be reliant on the rands and cents of workers themselves.

Free distribution would mean having to look to rich benefactors for support, who inevitably would try to exchange their money for a say in policy.

From sales of *Inqaba* at home, local funds should be built up to finance photocopying, distribution and the necessary travel costs of comrades in each area.

It is essential also for comrades to set aside and contribute weekly as much money as possible into a 'fighting fund' for political activities. *Cash-consciousness is part of political consciousness.*

Supporters who organise discussion groups round *Inqaba* should take regular collections for the journal.

To our readers and supporters abroad we appeal for regular donations to enable us to expand our work.

Help the ideas of Marxism gain a mass hearing in the labour and youth movement.

Letters and donations from outside South Africa should be sent to:

INQABA YA BASEBENZI
BM Box 1719,
London WC1N 3XX

WORKING FOR A MUNICIPALITY

**A member of
SABMAWU
speaks**

What are the conditions where you work?

I am working for a municipality. The conditions there are highly unsatisfactory—the low pay and the treatment meted out to the workers by white supervisors and managers.

It is downright brutal. We are still being called 'kaffirs', or 'boys' in some cases. If you complain, it is never resolved by the higher management.

We work from 7 a.m. until 4.30 p.m., with one 30-minute lunch break and two tea breaks of 10 minutes each. In my case, I get R330 per month.

My employer is one of the so-called 'progressive', 'equal-opportunity' employers—most municipalities pay the workers far less than us. R200 or even less is what they usually pay.

I feel I'm not able to live properly on the wage I get. So I just can't imagine how anyone can manage on lower wages.

How is the situation regarding health and safety where you work?

That is a question we workers tended to neglect. It was only after the NUM raised safety issues that we started realising that there are a lot of areas in our work that are also unsafe.

We found, for instance, that the electricity in one depot was wired wrongly. Management's initial reaction was surprise! Then they threatened us and wanted to know how we got the information! We demanded that an outside technician should be

brought in if they didn't want to accept our point.

In the past year six members of our union have been killed in road accidents during work.

Drivers are given more work than they can handle, and are forced to drive too fast. Then, refuse removers

have to run up to the trucks to tip the bins—and they have no time to look for oncoming traffic. They get knocked down by cars.

Four of the six workers killed died like that. The other two were old men responsible for picking up papers alongside the road. They were not



Municipal dustmen have to run to keep up with the truck.

trained in road safety and got knocked down by a car.

Management should train these people in road safety if they are expected to work alongside the roads.

What proportion of municipal workers are migrant workers?

About 90% or more of the black workers are migrant workers. The conditions in the hostels are terrible.

The municipality I work for never planned properly for the number of workers it would need. They applied to the administration board for 600 beds. But after a few years they had to hire more workers and then didn't have enough space for them.

So they just put more beds in each room in the hostels, which were already crowded. The workers now found that, in bed, you were sleeping on someone else's feet. You were just packed in like sardines.

And the hostels themselves are just massive concrete structures with no entertainment facilities. The washing areas are not adequate. In the kitchens, workers have to cook in turns on small electric burners—so that many have to eat half-cooked food.

The only facility for relaxing after work in the hostel is just a place where workers can go and have a sorghum beer.

How has the recession affected union membership?

Despite what you would expect, membership of most unions actually increased during the recession. When management began to retrench a lot of workers, the workers realised that without a trade union they are in a very disappointed position.

Within the municipal sector, several unions are organising workers. Don't you think it would be a good idea to unite in one union for all municipal workers?

It would be very good if that could be achieved. The main thing is to get workers organised so that they themselves feel the necessity of forming one union which can challenge whatever they are faced with, so that they can take a common stand.

But at the same time it is up to the leaders of all the municipal unions to initiate unity, and to play their part in trying to unite the whole trade union movement.

TRADE UNIONS AND THE UDF

Interview with an activist in FOSATU

How do the workers in your union look at the UDF?

The workers want only one thing: that is to push harder. That is why they support the UDF.

Do FOSATU members go to UDF meetings?

Yes. There are shop stewards and organisers who go to the meetings. Many people went to the first meeting in Cape Town. I myself wanted to go but I wasn't able to.

How do you explain FOSATU's decision not to join the UDF?

In the UDF there are organisations that don't accept all nations, that are only open to blacks. They are not non-racial. FOSATU can't live in the same room as those organisations.

The next point is that the UDF leaders are doctors and lawyers. They won't fight for workers. The last point is that every organisation has one vote. There are organisations with few members but very big voices.

Also, UDF meetings are all in English and many workers don't understand. So it's easy to criticise the UDF and say it's only for educated people.

Was this decision discussed by FOSATU members?

Yes, there was a big meeting to discuss the UDF. Some of us wanted FOSATU to join. But the officials persuaded us that we should not join yet. However, union members can join as individuals.

What do you think of Inqaba's argument, that it is the working class who should lead the UDF, and the workers' organisations should therefore struggle for working-class

policies and leadership in the UDF?

I agree that the workers should lead. Now it is the middle class who are the leaders of the UDF. If FOSATU calls a strike, it is the workers who decide. But if the UDF leaders, the doctors and lawyers call it, who strikes? The workers. If there is going to be a bus boycott, or if the rents are going up and we refuse to pay, who does that first? The workers. If we take any action, it must be us who decides.

But don't you think that the workers will be able to change the UDF if they went there in their organisations, instead of as individuals?

Yes, it could be. It could be like the industrial councils. We used to think that it would be impossible to do anything there. The councils were under control of the bosses. But some unions joined them and found they were strong enough to fight there for the workers. We should be strong enough to change the UDF.

Do you think FOSATU will join the UDF in future?

I think first there would have to be unity between the unions. Then there must be seats on the UDF according to the membership of the organisations. Also I believe all organisations must be non-racial, but that can be worked out later. Once the workers are united, they must go into the UDF.

Should the workers just wait for that? Some unions are already in the UDF. Wouldn't it be best for workers in all the unions outside the UDF to begin discussing a change of policy now—to prepare to take their organisations into the UDF as soon as they are agreed?

Maybe you are right.



Part of the crowd of 12 000 who attended the launching of the UDF last August.

TRADE UNIONS AND THE UDF

Interview with an activist in CUSA

What is your view of the efforts being made to unite the trade union movement?

The organised workers, especially the black workers, in all the trade unions can see the need to unite into a broad-based organisation, because once we are united we will be strong to challenge the system as it stands now.

It is just unfortunate that during the last unity talks (in October) officials of trade unions had to allow differences which should not divide the workers to stall the talks. The ordinary members of trade unions should exert pressure on the leaders to get unity.

As a worker I feel that my first affinity is with other workers. Trade unions organise the workers as workers, and not because of their different beliefs. Why should different political ideology be used as an instrument against unity on a trade union basis?

Some trade union leaders have the

idea that, once the unions are stronger, it will be possible to establish harmonious, peaceful relations between workers and employers.

I'd call that plain nonsense.

Capital and labour are inherently in a conflict situation. Management regard labour as a commodity which they try to force down as low as possible in order to make their profits—so I don't believe in the concept of harmonious relations between labour and capital.

What is your attitude towards the United Democratic Front?

If utilised properly, it is a very important organisation to emerge in South Africa, because it unites in one body so many different organisations struggling in the society.

We should not lose sight of the fact that most of the organisations (cultural organisations, charity organisations, trade unions) in the UDF consist of workers. I think the worker must play the predominant

role in the UDF. It should be directed towards the needs of the workers.

What do you think of the leadership of the UDF?

If we look at the present leadership—who do they represent? They are professional people who represent themselves, their own interests. They are not organised with workers in trade unions and they do not have the same aspirations as we do.

They are middle-class, so our interests won't be satisfied.

It is the workers themselves who must rule the UDF, because you cannot divorce the workers' organisations from all the other organisations in society.

FOSATU decided to remain outside the UDF on the grounds of its middle-class composition and leadership. On the other hand, CUSA has gone in. What policy do you now think is correct?

On the face of it, FOSATU's seem-

ed a correct standpoint to take—but if you look at it closely I think the approach was a wrong one.

It is rather the duty of the workers' organisations such as FOSATU and CUSA to go into the UDF, and take it from within and change it. It is necessary to expose this middle-class leadership to the workers, so that the UDF can be redirected, controlled by the workers, and used as a political organisation of the workers.

Concerning CUSA, I think the leadership took a good decision to go into the UDF. But once they were there they should have made themselves a force to be reckoned with within the UDF. They should expose the different interests between the present leadership and the workers, and show what must be done if the UDF is to really satisfy the workers' demands.

How do you think the trade unions should participate in the UDF?

A union is a body made up of many small organisations. On the shop floor you have shop-stewards' committees; there are branch committees, regional committees, etc. I think all these could be affiliated to the UDF. That would give the workers' organisations more direct participation and more votes within the UDF, so that they could redirect the way the UDF takes up the political struggle.

How do you think freedom will be achieved in South Africa?

The only way is by mobilising the workers to take over the means of production, and create a state that will satisfy the aspirations of the working class.

Some people argue that it is necessary to achieve the objects of the struggle in stages—that the first thing is to overthrow apartheid, and only after that address ourselves to the problem of how to overthrow the capitalist system. They say that, to argue for a workers' revolution to overthrow capitalism is divisive at this stage—that it is not just a workers' struggle but a struggle of the black people as a whole. What comment would you make on that?

I'd say this argument is dividing the people, and would lead to very great division.

Immediately you say you've got to overthrow apartheid, you have got to replace it with something. What is it? Do they say we must overthrow our

Letter:

“We have some disagreements...”

Dear comrades,

We have been discussing *Inqaba's* position on the trade unions and the UDF. Only one of the comrades has had access to the Journal, so we are dependent on this comrade's interpretation of your position.

We have some disagreements.

For us the priority, overriding everything else is the building of the new trade union Federation, so that the question of the organised workers taking over and building the UDF, is not yet on the agenda, even if it was the correct step.

It is important for comrades in exile to know that it is the 'community/UDF/Congress' unions who are now obstructing the new Federation, specifically by refusing to accept democratic principles in relation to demarcation. We are very concerned with reports from two different sources in the NIC and SAAWU, that there is a **deliberate** policy to obstruct the new Federation.

There are problems of organisation and democracy, within all the unions, even the FOSATU unions, which means that we are not sufficiently strong yet to combine trade union organisation with the task of dealing with the confusion induced by the

petit bourgeois leaders of the UDF.

For us the way forward is the building, with or without SAAWU, GAWU and MACWUSA, of the new trade union Federation, the consolidation of that Federation and the building of a Workers' party.

We believe that the Federation will be functioning by late next year, while the UDF leadership will continue more or less along the present lines, as the 400 organisations, now 550, becomes 700 and so on and as the middle-class leadership more and more discredit the UDF and the ANC, in the eyes of the organised workers.

The comrades are too soft on SAAWU. Courage, heroism and great loyalty to SACTU and the ANC certainly exist but so also does slipshod organisation and fighting with almost every other union in SA, reaching physical proportions with the GWU in Durban.

There are in fact three SAAWUs, Durban (Kikine), Tvl and East London (Gwqeta), with the possibility of agreement on the Federation being reached with Gwqeta.

How serious are these people about unity in the trade unions or the UDF?

Workers Johannesburg and Durban

Editors' note—*For Inqaba's position on uniting the trade unions in a new Federation, please turn to page 18. In the last issue (no. 11—which the comrades had not seen) we dealt with the question of a Workers' party which they raise. In future issues we will return to this again, as the discussion in the movement develops. We hope other readers will send in contributions on this very important question.*

present masters just to replace them by other masters? That is what it will mean if capitalism remains.

How can links of solidarity be built and maintained between workers of different countries?

The only way solidarity can be built internationally is by the workers themselves, through solidarity action

by workers in different countries.

We have got to stop relying just on the so-called worker leadership at the head of the trade unions in other countries—leaders who have got far out of touch with the basic interests of the workers.

It is necessary to develop direct ties between workers of other parts of the globe through solidarity campaigns.

TRADE UNION UNITY

EDITORIAL BOARD STATEMENT

which was circulated in South Africa on 20 February 1984.

At the trade union unity talks last October, long-standing differences of attitude towards the formation of a new federation came sharply to the surface.

The occasion for the open rift was not accidental—the discussion had moved from the stage of verbal generalities to the stage of practical commitment. Unions were expected to supply precise information about their organised strength, to enable detailed negotiations to take place, leading to the creation of one union in each industry, within one united federation.

When SAAWU, GAWU and MACWUSA/GWUSA representatives proved unwilling or unable to provide the necessary details, the representatives of FOSATU, CUSA, FCWU, CCAWUSA, GWU and CTMWA decided to continue the discussions themselves—if necessary without the participation of the first-mentioned unions.

In place of the previous 'feasibility committee', a 'co-ordinating committee' was formed comprising delegates from each union willing to submit detailed information, to discuss problems of demarcation and other issues.

Subsequently, the next round of unity talks scheduled for 13 November did not take place.

After the high hopes for unity raised by earlier progress, the apparently sudden setback in October, followed by the postponement in November, led to an atmosphere of disappointment among most workers.

Reports in the SA bourgeois press cultivated this mood—and it was not effectively counteracted by union leaders. On the whole, union members have not been kept fully informed about the precise difficulties in the way of unity—nor have they been involved adequately in the discussion of how these difficulties can be overcome. As a result, even union activists began expressing a general pessimism about the prospects for uniting the unions.

Most of the reports from workers which have reached the *Inqaba* editorial board in the past three months have reflected this pessimism. However, on studying detailed notes made during successive phases of the unity talks, it is clear that *a high level of agreement on principle and on practical issues has been reached between the representatives of CUSA and FOSATU—the two industrial federations—as well as FCWU, GWU, CCAWUSA and CTMWA.*

A sound basis still exists for the formation of a new federation which would include at least the major sections of workers organised in industry.

With the next round of unity talks scheduled for 3 March, *Inqaba* supporters in the various unions are asked to discuss with their fellow workers the points outlined below, and let the editorial board have their comments, as well as reports on the developing situation, as soon as possible.

1. The rebuilding of the trade union movement by African workers over the past ten years has begun to raise the confidence and understanding of black workers generally that the working class has the power to win struggles against the class enemy, **and the potential in due course to take on and defeat the bosses and the state.**

2. Workers seek the unity of the trade union movement in order to extend and build this power, and to test it in action. Progress towards trade union unity is a vital element in the morale and readiness to struggle of the entire working class—of the organised and unorganised workers, as well as the youth, the women at home, and the people working on the land. In turn, it affects the middle layers of society, who can be won to the side of the working class when the workers' movement demonstrates its power and vitality in action.

3. The divisions in the independent, democratic trade union movement have arisen from the different beginnings of organisation in different areas over the past decade—but these differences have been hardened and deepened in the recent period, not by any fundamental differences among the rank-and-file, but by rival ambitions, ideological standpoints which are not clearly work-

ed out, and conservative narrowness of outlook on the part of some union leaders seeking merely to safeguard their own positions in the face of the tidal movement of the working class which is now arising.

4. In standing for the unity of the trade unions in one national federation, we must urge upon all union leaders the utmost flexibility and readiness to compromise on secondary organisational issues, while standing firm on the need for:

- ★ democratic workers' control of every union;
- ★ opposition in principle to racial division of the working-class movement;
- ★ the freedom of different political tendencies in the working-class movement to put their point of view before the workers, subject to the discipline in action of abiding by majority decisions democratically made.

5. The setback in the October unity talks (with the open rift between SAAWU, GAWU and MACWUSA/GWUSA on the one hand, and FOSATU, CUSA, FCWU, CCAWUSA, GWU and CTMWA on the other) has disappointed the hopes of workers for an **all-embracing federation**. Exploiting this situation, the strategists of the capitalist class, their press and their state, have tried to propagate the idea that trade union unity

is now unachievable—and (so they hope) break the momentum towards unity on the part of the organised workers. **It is necessary to fight against this view.**

6. In reality, there is still a favourable prospect of forming a new federation which would represent a significant step forward for the trade union movement, and so advance the longer-term prospect of wider unity. A new federation could now be formed comprising at least the workers in the main industrial unions—which would include the vast majority of organised black workers. This will be possible provided that the pressure of the rank-and-file workers for unity is kept up, and the necessary political will and clarity of purpose prevails on the part of trade union leaders.

7. **Industrial unions the backbone.** The backbone of a new federation—which, it is generally agreed, must comprise one national union in each industry—would consist primarily of CUSA's National Union of Mineworkers plus the major industrial unions of FOSATU fused together with their CUSA and other equivalents. Around this backbone, the flesh of a mighty united federation of labour could form (allowing also for one or more general unions covering only those sectors of workers who do not fall into any of the main industrial demarcations).

8. **United Front policy.** If SAAWU, GAWU or MACWUSA/GWUSA remain initially outside a new industrial federation, what policy should be followed towards them by those who do join?

Firstly, a genuine fraternal invitation to these unions to bring their forces into the new federation should be maintained at all times, despite the bitterness and even hostility which has developed in the recent period.

Secondly, a clear distinction must be drawn between union leaders who obstruct unity and the rank-and-file who need and want unity. A hostile attitude towards the members of SAAWU, etc., must not be allowed to take root in the ranks of the new federation—for only the enemies of the working class will gain from that.

Thirdly, it is vital that the leaders of all unions entering into—or preparing to enter into—a new federation should maintain a policy of calling for unity in action with the unions which remain outside. For this purpose a national **program of action** on minimum wage and other demands should be put forward. Also, the creation of local solidarity action committees should be supported for the purpose of cementing unity at rank-and-file level, and for extending the hand of co-operation, and the invitation to joint struggle, to the workers of unions remaining for the time being outside the framework of the new federation.

Only by means of such an active policy can the ranks of those other unions be persuaded to bring their organisations into the new federation, and the efforts of some leaders to sow hostility and frustrate unity can be overcome.

9. In the course of forming a new federation:

(a) Priority should be given to fusing together the present rival industrial unions, on a basis of "one industry, one union", under democratic constitutions. Key here are the industrial unions of FOSATU and CUSA—plus FCWU in the food industry, the component parts of GWU in engineering, transport, etc. To achieve this fusion, direct discussions between the industrial unions themselves are also necessary.

(b) The main industrial unions (foremost among them the NUM and MAWU) should take the lead in proposing practical measures (inside CUSA and FOSATU, and also publicly), to get the federation under way as soon as possible.

(c) Representation on the leading bodies of the federation should be

- ★ primarily in proportion to the authenticated membership of the various industrial unions, etc., which comprise the federation;
- ★ but also with some weighting to ensure a voice for the smaller unions.

(d) To resolve the conflict over whether representation at federation conferences/congresses should be according to **paid-up membership** or **signed-up membership**, a compromise should be sought

- ★ giving recognition to the aim of ensuring fully paid-up membership as a criterion of union strength,
- ★ but also recognising that, in some industries and some areas, especially where stop-order facilities are denied or where repression is very severe, this criterion alone would not fully reflect the strength or fairly represent the membership of unions concerned.

One way out of the conflict could be

- ★ to guarantee (as a minimum) representation according to paid-up membership, and
- ★ to allow **additional** representation in respect of non paid-up members where the union concerned is able to satisfy a control commission (consisting of worker leaders from several unions who enjoy the trust of the whole movement) that the additional members claimed are, despite not being paid-up, authentically organised union members.

A method such as this could ensure fair representation, e.g., to trade union members in East London, mineworkers in Bophuthatswana, and so on, without details which would endanger them being publicly revealed.

10. **Subordinate disagreements**, e.g., on whether officials should be allowed to be included with voting rights on delegations; on whether funds should be accepted from abroad, and how funds of the federation should be controlled; on whether regional structures (acknowledged to be necessary) should have formal decision-making powers, etc.—if such questions cannot be settled in advance, at least temporarily, through compromise—should be left to be decided by argument and voting at the first federation conference/congress, when rival proposals can be put in the form of resolutions before the delegates, or where alternative versions of particular clauses in a proposed constitution can be submitted.

11. The main point to stress is that the unity of the trade unions—if it is to be real—must be **based**, not so much on paper formulas and complete unanimity at the top, as on the **active solidarity in struggle** of the unions' ranks. Therefore the key to the progress of the trade union movement remains its political leadership and direction, which must be embodied above all in a **program of action** and a **united front policy**. For this the leaders of the main industrial unions, the "heavy battalions" of the labour movement—especially the NUM and MAWU—have the main responsibility. It is a responsibility not only towards their own members, but to the movement as a whole.

From the TRADE UNION press:

The following message was sent by CUSA to the Food & Canning Workers' Union for their Annual Conference in August:

"We wish to greet and congratulate the members of the Food & Canning Workers Union on this 43rd conference held in Johannesburg.

There are many issues that will confront you in this conference, the hard attitude of intransigent management, the low wages being proposed at negotiations, the retrenchments in the industry and the increasing mechanization of plants which means less work and less money. But also

means more poverty and more hungry school children.

The economic challenge to us is too great for us to overcome on our own. CUSA will therefore pledge its solidarity to the FCWU on these matters. In the meanwhile the Government has unfolded a plan devised by the President's men to further divide the workers and the nations. It is left to us to ensure that this plan does not work. CUSA has pledged to support all groups and all efforts against this plan and will therefore willingly join hands with our brothers and sisters in the FCWU to ensure that it does not work.

Our pledge of unity is not a fragile

pledge. We supported the campaign for the Fattis & Monis workers. We worked hard to ensure that the death of Neil Aggett was not in vain.

We have pledged ourselves to explore unity in a new federation. But we do not believe that this should be a unity of words or meetings of leaders. We believe it must be a unity of workers all armed in a common struggle for worker rights and political freedom.

We therefore salute you and your achievements and wish to let you know that your struggle is our struggle in building one united people."

**From Izwilethu
Vol. 1, No. 7**

METAL AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION PRESS STATEMENT ON TAXES

Despite the recession, most of the major companies in South Africa have succeeded in reporting tremendous profits for 1983.

On the other hand, workers have suffered more and more—their real standard of living has dropped more as inflation, more dependants (through unemployment), loss of agricultural land and loss of livestock have forced workers to spread their money more thinly than ever. More families are falling below the breadline than before.

Now the Government has administered another terrible blow to workers and their families by increasing GST by a further 1 per cent.

The families on or below the breadline just can't afford it. There are so many other ways for the Government to collect the money it needs from those who can afford it: marginal taxes, taxes on profits etc.

But workers are not represented on the committees that recommend

changes in taxes—and those who can afford to pay are represented, both directly and indirectly.

MAWU's National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting on 29 January, resolved that all MAWU members should be encouraged to put as the first part of any wage demand to employers that 1 per cent to make up for the GST increase. The NEC resolved that if workers have no voice in Government, they must speak where they do have a voice—at work.

The NEC also discussed the new 'equal' tax dispensation. The NEC noted that:-

1. Although the tax paid will be equalised, the benefit of the money will not go equally to all groups in South Africa.
2. Some groups in South Africa have tax with representation, the majority do not. This is not equality.
3. The Departments responsible for UIF and other funds have proved

totally inadequate to operate these funds. The tax changes will place huge responsibilities on the responsible department, and the NEC expects this to prove as inadequate and chaotic as other departments. Workers will in practice never get the benefit of rebates because of this, and because in any case most workers will not be able to fill in the assessment and other tax forms.

30.1.84



MAWU has since given a lead, not only to all metal workers, but to all workers in industry by the wage demands it has raised in this year's pay talks. The union wants a minimum of R2.50 per hour for a 40-hour week, and an across-the-board increase for all workers of 50c an hour. It is now up to the leaders of the old sectional metal unions to support these demands to the full—or show that they are not prepared to fight for the workers' interests.

Tactics in a struggle for union democracy

Inqaba has received a letter asking advice on a struggle over democracy which is taking place within a particular trade union. To protect the security of the worker who wrote to us, we cannot publish the letter or answer it in detail here.

Most of the independent unions built in South Africa over the past decade are known for a high degree of active participation and democratic control by the rank-and-file. Nevertheless, there are a number of unions—all over Southern Africa, in fact—which are dominated by officials comfortable in their bureaucratic privileges and hostile to democratic demands of the membership.

In these organisations the problem of how to fight effectively for rank-and-file control is becoming a crucial one. For this reason we would like to make some general points here, which may be useful to our correspondent and to others in similar situations in future.

Workers need the trade unions as militant, fighting organisations, to raise and defend living standards and working conditions against the power of the employers and their government allies. Democracy in the unions is necessary—and is understood by workers to be necessary—to achieve this purpose. It is also a vital part of preparing the working class eventually to establish its democratic rule of society.

A bureaucratic union leadership is almost always one which wants to tame the workers for the sake of reaching a cosy 'peace' with the employers.

The independent unions in South Africa have made internal democracy a central issue precisely because the pressures of the bosses and the state are so ruthless and severe; because democratic rank-and-file control is needed to ensure that union leaders do not succumb to the hostile pressures put on them from 'above'.

Bureaucratic leadership should not be confused with strong leadership. Bureaucrats may be 'strong' against their own members, but tend to be weak (whatever the appearances they give) when dealing with the enemy. Workers want and need strong union leadership, which leads from the front and is decisive, provided that it loyally accepts control and correction by the membership and

responds readily to the workers' demands.

The entrenched position of old union bureaucracies will weaken as more and more workers join the unions (even the more conservative unions) looking for a weapon of struggle—and find their aims frustrated by the manoeuvres of self-satisfied officials.

A struggle for democracy in a union should, as far as possible, be linked in the minds of the membership with the question of the union's program of demands and the readiness or otherwise of the leaders to lead a fight in their members' interests.

These general points are important to bear in mind when taking up a struggle for democracy inside any union, because they can help to avoid many pitfalls.

From the letter and the material sent to us by the worker mentioned above, we get the impression that, if right is in many respects on his and his comrades' side, their tactics have unfortunately not always been the best.

Again without being too specific, we will try to explain what we mean.

Especially where many previously unorganised workers are joining unions for the first time, they will very much respect the existing leaders of the organisations through which they first awakened to struggle. This will tend to be the case even when that respect is not altogether deserved.

The majority of union members will usually regard an attack on an established leadership as unjustified if they do not have personal experience of the leaders' misconduct and if it is not clearly shown how their own interests are directly affected by it.

In that case the criticisms raised may be suspected by many of the members to arise from some personal 'power struggle'. Then even a well-merited criticism of the leadership can actually meet with anger on the part of workers, or at least gain little active support from them.

For the same reasons, union members will also expect serious charges against leaders to be well-proved—and will tend not to be impressed by a whole barrage of complaints in which the serious is mixed together with the relatively trivial, and well-grounded points lumped together with others which may be more doubtful. That can easily confuse the central issues, and give the advantage to the people attacked.

It is precisely when you feel frustrated and provoked beyond endurance by the manoeuvres of an official bureaucracy

that you must keep a cool head. Remember that it is not your own sense of injustice which is decisive, but how the issues are understood by your fellow members.

In a struggle for union democracy, it is not necessary to win each round—the important thing is to win ultimately. That requires the conscious involvement of the **whole** membership—something that may need time to develop.

Therefore, starting from a minority position, your campaign needs to be soberly mounted, one step at a time, and every issue patiently explained. Above all, you must take the trouble to show over and over again (until every possible suspicion is removed throughout the ranks of the union) that you are putting the interests of the union first. It is usually not enough to say this—it has to be shown in everything you do.

It is probably best to limit your campaign at first to a few clear issues, where every member can easily see who is right.

Don't look for short-cuts or sudden sensations to win a serious struggle. Rely on facts, figures and patient argument. In this way it is possible to gain a hearing and win wide support for a sound position without the danger of causing confusion and division in the ranks.

Also, it is usually wise to state your criticisms very moderately (no matter how angry you feel), letting others draw the full conclusions themselves. In this way, also, the onus is shifted to your opponent to make a reasonable reply.

Your right to criticise is most likely to be supported by your fellow members, and your position accepted as correct, if you can show by your own hard work—e.g., in recruiting new members in unorganised workplaces—that you are putting the general interest of the union first.

The union in this particular case is growing fast and is clearly the most important in its sector. Its viability as a genuine workers' organisation is beyond doubt. **On no account** should you—as, unfortunately, you seem to have done—raise the threat of splitting the union. Who can possibly benefit from that? In any event, it would only ensure your own isolation and defeat, and perhaps the waste of many good comrades.

Even if you are unjustly expelled, you should maintain firmly your loyalty to the union and go on helping to build it. No-one can stop you doing that. Then you will eventually be carried back with honour into the union and the position of those who have victimised you will be weakened.

Mine safety—

PROFIT SYSTEM PUTS WORKERS AT RISK

The methane gas explosion at Hlobane coal mine in September killed 68 workers and wounded several more. Dr. H. Eisner, a British expert on mine safety called to give evidence by the National Union of Mineworkers at the Holbane enquiry, said deaths in underground coal mines in SA are six times higher than in Britain.

The magistrate at the inquest has since found ISCOR criminally responsible for the explosion, for failing to maintain safety standards.

But it is not only on coal mines that workers are constantly at risk. Before the enquiry, a member of the NUM spoke to an *Inqaba* reporter about conditions on the gold mines.

“Management are looking after production. For them, safety is a secondary issue. The workers are not entitled to say a word as far as safety is concerned. They’re only entitled to carry out instructions from the bosses.

Underground workers are facing many different accidents which may occur—methane gas, rockbursts, or the fall of a hanging rock.

Underground it is so hot that you will be feeling sweat even before you start working. It is dusty and noisy as well.

On gold mines they are introducing ice-jackets for new workers. This is to avoid acclimatising them on the surface, as they have been doing up to now.

They realise they have been losing production, while these workers have been entitled to be paid for a shift worked.

So now they will go directly underground and will have to wear ice-jackets for the whole of the shift, for about 5 days. Then they will be classified ‘acclimatised’.

Most of the workers are complaining about this ice-jacket.

Underground we wear safety clothing like the helmet, kneecaps and gloves. But these can only protect in minor accidents. They are useless against methane, useless as far

as a rockburst is concerned.

If there is an accident there is a telephone system. If perhaps there are some guys next to stations they can telephone the surface and tell what has happened.

At one of the mines they have a computer recording the rock and the methane, so they can discover as soon as possible on what level the accident happened.

But then someone will still have to go down to find out how dangerous it is.

Management neglecting safety precautions

In many cases you’ll find that the accidents are being caused by management neglecting the safety precautions because they are in a hurry to get production. More especially if the price of gold on the market goes down, that’s when you’ll experience a lot of accidents.

The management say rockbursts are natural—you can’t stop rockbursts. But according to other



mining engineers that is nonsense.

Most accidents are not reported. But that will change once the union gets to all the mines and recruits the workers.

About 3 or 4 workers are dying every day on the mines. About 1 000 die every year—and about 17 000 are seriously injured.

When you are injured you get one-third of your wages. If you die, your dependents get 24 times your monthly salary, and nothing more.

Workers are suffering a lot of diseases. I can’t describe them all because I’m not a specialist—but there are a lot of chest complaints, ‘flu because of the water underground, and a rash all over the body caused by heat.

Ears and eyes are problems. Almost every part of the body is being affected.

The different mining companies have got hospitals next to the mines, and there are doctors specialising about injuries.

But the treatment of some diseases, for example allergies, is very bad. So much so that some workers pay to see private doctors.

Management are interested in their profits, not in the safety of the workers. This will not change as long as the mines are controlled by bosses and not by the workers.”

Mineworkers interviewed:

What mine are you working at?

I'm at Vaal Reefs.

How does the National Union of Mineworkers recruit there?

They are distributing leaflets, showing a black man fighting another black man, but kneeling down in front of the white man. It is teaching us to rise up off our knees and to demand our rights.

Has the union much support?

Yes, many of us joined the union this year (1983). We want more money.

What has the union achieved?

We are going to get equal compensation with whites for TB and the union is going to get the safety regulations improved. But the wages

are still bad. We were expecting a big increase in June and we were very unhappy with the small amount.

What happened?

When the slips came with the small increase, we were all very angry. One threw his slip back, saying this is not a wage increase, this is only a tip—that is how we felt and we wanted to strike immediately.

The NUM organisers pleaded with us not to strike and said that we were not yet strongly organised and we would all be sent back to the Transkei and Lesotho.

We still wanted to strike but the union asked us to give them another year and they will get us a big rise, so we wanted to give the union a chance.

How much money do you think you should get?

We want the same as the whites. We are doing all the work.

The union is needed to stop the divisions among us. The bosses are trying to divide us. The top grade workers get R330 and over and they have separate places to eat and have houses where they can have their wives to visit. We all have wives and families and want them to be with us.

How can the union improve things?

Before, there might be a strike in one shaft or one shift might go on strike and other workers would not know about it. Now the union can tell us all what is happening so there will be no division.

What mine do you work at?

I'm at Virginia. We are many thousand Basotho there.

How is it at the mine? How is the money, first of all?

For me the money is good. I am grade 8. But I have many depending on me, as none of my family can get work. I need more money and I should get the same as the whites.

Some are against whites, but at least we have work here in South Africa and money. Even low-paid workers here get much more than you can get at home, where there is no work.

How is the hostel and the food?

The food the mine buys is good but it is not prepared well and by the time it reaches us it is terrible. I buy a lot of food for myself.

The compound is bad. Look...you have a hundred men and a few showers in the roof. Also the rows of open toilets are terrible; you never get used to it. And the rooms have 36.

Is the union in the mine?

There is some sort of small union but its useless to us.

Have you heard about the National Union of Mineworkers?

Yes, but it has not reached our mine yet. (September, 1983—Editor) We heard on Capital Radio, that

there was to be a half hour stopping of work in all mines because of Hlobane, but there was nothing at our mine because of no one to organise it.

We need the union. Truly speaking, last year I did not know that there was unions for black workers. I thought it was only for the whites, but I have seen in Golden City Press about the unions in the firms.

You say that your wages are good?

My grade get more than graduates in Lesotho. But there are not many of us. Most Basotho do the hardest jobs and get low wages. These graduates are useless to Lesotho—all they do is support the BNP (the governing party of Chief Jonathan) because if they don't they will not get the scholarships.

Is there support for the LLA ('Lesotho Liberation Army', guerrilla arm of opposition BCP) in your mine?

There is very big support for it here. We give R10 per month. We want to throw out the BNP, who are doing what they like in Lesotho and oppressing us terribly.

Why is LLA working with the South African authorities?

Mokhehle was getting help from other countries after 1974, but it was

no use without guns and we had to get them through South Africa. Mokhehle was told by the Boers that we could take the arms across the Republic if we listened to their music.

So even if the LLA succeeds in throwing out Jonathan, won't there be a debt to be repaid to South Africa? Won't Lesotho still be under South Africa's thumb?

I don't know... We are confused now and don't know which way to move.

If the workers—especially the mineworkers—from Lesotho and South Africa become strongly organised together, then we will have the strength to fight against Jonathan and Botha.





THE DE BEERS

Are diamonds forever ?

The diamond is a very strange commodity.

For the sake of a small glittering stone, cut and polished to reflect light, the rich and fashionable are happy, even eager, to pay hundreds and thousands of rands, dollars, pounds, etc. For the larger stones, or for brilliant clusters of the jewels, absolute fortunes change hands among the millionaires, to decorate the ladies of leisure or perhaps light up the fingers of a Liberace.

Yet, it is said, if all the diamonds mined were to flood onto the markets of the world at the same time, their price would fall to the level of cut glass!

"Diamonds are forever," says the advertising slogan popularised by Harry Oppenheimer and 'immortalised' in the adventures of James Bond. But is this so?

Gem diamonds fetch such astronomical prices for the very reason that they are regarded as rare and precious. The rich want them for the very reason that you have to be rich to have them.

They are the ultimate symbol of wealth, status and snobbery in capitalist society—which is why those poor deluded members of the middle class who hope to join the bourgeoisie simply crave to have a diamond ring (or even an imitation one!), and often sink themselves into debt for the sake of it.

Along with its unscratchable hardness and brilliance, the value of the diamond certainly seems to last "forever".

by Paul Storey

For thousands of years gemstones have been a captivating embodiment of riches. With rubies and emeralds, diamonds are the stuff of myths and legends, of Aladdin's caves and children's tales of buried treasure chests.

Alexander the Great knew diamonds, as did the ancient Rajahs and Moguls of the East. For centuries the world's diamonds came almost

entirely from India, mined from the gravel of river beds.

By the late Middle Ages, they were traded in small quantities in Western Europe. There, as in Asia, most of the gems were gathered into the coffers of the powerful kings, princes and noblemen who gripped the wealth of the ancient, slave-owning and feudal societies in their exploiting hands.

Diamonds remained all the time very rare, the most "precious" of stones.

It was the rise of capitalism which brought diamonds onto the market on a significant scale, and which opened up diamond production on other continents.

There was a large demand for diamonds in Europe from the 1600s. In about 1725, diamond deposits

MONOPOLY -

were discovered in Brazil. But it was mainly the capitalist Industrial Revolution from the early 1800s which created a vast new market for jewelry, based on the expanding wealth of the bourgeoisie who developed production and built up their own power through the exploitation of wage-workers in industry.

This bourgeoisie, having merged with the rich merchants and bankers to form the modern capitalist class, still sits on the backs of the workers today—and still makes up the basis of the world market for gem diamonds, in its unquenchable lust to accumulate and hoard wealth.

The Industrial Revolution, and after it the scramble of the bourgeoisie for colonial empires, led to the discovery of vast new diamond fields. Most important among them were the diamond fields of South Africa, first discovered at the end of the 1860s.

Within fifty years, South Africa was producing nearly 80% of the world's diamonds.

Diamonds gave the first great stimulus to capitalism in South Africa. The second—and much greater—stimulus was to come from the discovery of gold.

From early on, the most farsighted of the diamond bosses realised that the very vastness of the diamond deposits in South Africa threatened their whole game.

They now had available modern machinery for mining. It would be possible to multiply many times the supply of diamonds to the markets of the world. But there lay the snag. If production and selling took place in an unorganised rush the price would fall sharply.

If 'every Joe Bloggs' in Europe or America could afford diamonds, these would cease to be the rare symbols of exclusive wealth, and the bottom would fall out of the diamond market altogether.

As the chairman of Barnato Brothers mining company observed:

when it came to diamonds "there is only one thing and that is reduced production and higher prices." Control over production and prices could only be achieved by the big diamond capitalists getting together and forming a monopoly.

In 1888 Rhodes and other mining magnates combined to form De Beers, based on the Kimberley diggings. Selling of diamonds was to be controlled through a central marketing agency in London.

Very soon, however, this monopoly was threatened by the discovery of new diamond deposits, and by rival national-capitalist interests.

New deposits

In 1899 Kruger's government in the Transvaal Republic passed a law giving the Boer state 60% of all diamond deposits discovered thereafter. Then the Premier mine was opened in the Transvaal and proved very rich. By 1907 it produced nearly as much output as De Beers. In 1909 more rich deposits were found in South-West Africa (Namibia), then under German colonial rule, and the diamonds from there were marketed through Berlin.

At this time we can already see a pattern that was to become familiar in the diamond industry up to the present day: constant new circumstances arising to undermine the price of diamonds and threaten the De Beers monopoly—and repeated extensions and strengthening of that monopoly on a higher level.

In 1907 there had been a temporary recession of world capitalism, and the demand for diamonds fell sharply. To keep the price up and protect the profits of each company, Premier reached an agreement with De Beers that they would both cut back production.

Then, when SWA diamonds came

onto the market, "a conference of producers in 1914 established a fixed quota system to regulate production. Each producer was allocated a fixed percentage of the total supply, which was surrendered to a central marketing agency." (*Africa Undermined*, by Greg Lanning with Marti Mueller, p57.)

Then came the 1917 revolution in Russia. At the end of the First World War, Lenin's government sold huge amounts of jewelry confiscated from the aristocracy to raise foreign exchange on the world market. To keep diamond prices from falling as a result, the capitalist producers in South Africa had to cut their own output for a time by 64%.

All this showed how vulnerable the diamond had already become to losing its 'magic'. 65 years later, the diamond is more vulnerable than ever—but it is still held high by a De Beers world monopoly which seems mightier than ever.

The modern history of the diamond is inseparable from the name Oppenheimer and the rise of the Anglo-American Corporation in South Africa as the power behind De Beers.

Initially, Ernest Oppenheimer (late father of the present boss, Harry) had no part in De Beers. Skilfully he had gained the support of British and American financiers to buy up the most important group of **gold mines** on the Witwatersrand. Using this as a base, he then turned his attention to gaining control of the world diamond trade. This meant battle with De Beers.

His capitalist eagle-eye spotted the weak point in the De Beers monopoly: it did not yet have diamond marketing under its own complete control.

But to move in effectively on diamond marketing, Oppenheimer had first to become a major producer. De Beers and its allies already had diamond production in South Africa sewn up. So Oppenheimer began by

buying up production outside South Africa and made deals with producers developing mining in Angola, the Congo and British Guyana. His massive financial resources and backing made this possible.

Next, through links with the South African Union government, he managed to snatch control of mining and marketing of the SWA diamonds away from De Beers. (SA had been given a "mandate" by the League of Nations to rule SWA when Germany was stripped of its colonies after World War I.)

Oppenheimer's Anglo-American company was then able to force its way in 1919, into the London marketing agency.

Other manoeuvres followed until he was able to induce a diamond producers' conference in 1926 into handing over all diamond marketing to a group of companies led by Anglo-American.

Now Oppenheimer was in a position to make De Beers itself 'an offer it couldn't refuse.' He became a director of the company. Within 3 years Anglo-American had established such control over De Beers that Oppenheimer himself became chairman of the company in 1929.

With production and selling organised together under Anglo-American/De Beers control; with the massive resources of gold mining and diamonds joined together with the backing of international banks; and with the company's links with the SA government and its SWA administration consolidated over the next few years, Oppenheimer was able to close off any opening for other capitalist mafiosi to muscle in on the diamond business.

Entrenched

De Beers was thus able to entrench its position over the years, even as vast new diamond deposits were discovered and mining opened up in more and more countries.

When, for instance, in the early 1970s, the powerful Lonrho corporation tried to do a deal with the government of Sierra Leone to take over the marketing of its diamonds on more favourable terms, the De Beers monopoly was strong enough to rout even this competitor.

Despite the tremendous increase in

diamond production over the years, De Beers has managed, through its Central Selling Organisation in London, to regulate supply according to the capacities of the capitalist market, and so keep the world diamond price up—and even rising!

In 1888 the price was just over £1 per carat; in 1920 it was over £5; today it is about £30. (A carat is 0,2 grams weight.)

How sustained?

How has De Beers sustained its monopoly despite constant new diamond discoveries in other countries, and the strong temptation for new producers to disregard controls and quotas and try to make a quick "killing" on the world market?

Firstly, the sheer size, financial strength and experience of the Anglo-American/De Beers group makes it extremely difficult, probably impossible, for any rival company now to push it aside. It remains unrivalled as the formidable diamond power.

Secondly, and equally important, there is the peculiar character of the diamond as a commodity, which we mentioned before: its price must either soar or plummet; it must either be very expensive or become 'dirt cheap'.

Because any flooding of the world market with diamonds threatens to shatter the profitability of the entire industry, there is a strong 'logic' compelling producers to co-operate together and restrict sales in their own interests. Even the Soviet Union today sells its diamonds to capitalist countries through the De Beers' CSO. Angola's Diamang corporation has not only its sales, but also its production, managed by De Beers.

On occasions governments have tried to wriggle out of the De Beers vice-grip and 'go it alone' in the marketing of diamonds. But each time the harsh realities of the capitalist market, together with ruthless manoeuvring by De Beers, have forced them once again to submit.

The Sierra Leone government of Siaka Stevens experimented in an independent direction, but shrank back from it in 1972.

More recently, Zaire pulled out of a long-standing exclusive agreement

with De Beers to market the output from the huge Miba mine, and instead, in May 1981, signed a contract with three independent dealers.

The background to the Zairean move was the world recession and the cut-backs in selling which the CSO imposed in order to maintain prices. Desperate for foreign exchange, the ailing capitalist regime of Mobutu hoped to solve its problems by side-stepping De Beers.

Most of Zaire's output is low-grade industrial diamonds, which, because the stone is so hard, are used for instance in the manufacture of drilling heads. To counter Mobutu's move and prevent others from following suit, De Beers began to dump its own stocks of industrial diamonds, or 'boart', onto the market, thus contributing to a fall of two-thirds in boart prices!

De Beers had the financial reserves to do this—a common tactic of all capitalist monopolies when they are smashing the competition of smaller rivals. Mobutu quickly capitulated, dropped the three independent dealers in mid-contract, and returned to the De Beers fold.

In his April 1983 Chairman's statement, Harry Oppenheimer was able to declare smugly that "the Government of Zaire has recently judged it to be in its best interest to renew its old-established relationship with us."

Watching all this, the Australian Labour government also decided to submit to De Beers and market the output of its vast new Argyle mine through the SA monopoly. This was not long after the previous (conservative) Prime Minister, Fraser, had told the Australian parliament that he saw "no advantage" in such a deal!

Weakness

Nevertheless, the prevailing impression of invincible strength of De Beers—and the apparently permanent high price of diamonds—hides a weakness that has long been developing in the foundations of the system.

The weakness is that rapidly increasing diamond production is more and more outstripping the narrow limits of the world market for diamonds. Moreover, the capitalist



world is now facing incurable economic problems which, in the cycles of crisis, will repeatedly shrink this market.

If there is another great depression, like that of 1929-33, which is likely even within the next decade, this would probably cause the diamond market to collapse catastrophically. And, to add to all this, the expansion of diamond mining in more and more countries beyond SA removes a growing proportion of world production further and further from De Beers' direct control.

What are the implications?

When recession cuts the world market, De Beers is no longer able to enforce production cut-backs in all the countries and major mines with

which it is involved. It has to rely on the quota system, to reduce the quantities of diamonds which it is obligated to buy from the producers. As we saw in the case of Zaire, the resulting fall in a country's foreign exchange earnings can strain the relationship with De Beers, at least temporarily, to breaking-point.

To avoid this problem becoming general, De Beers' practice has been to try to maintain as far as possible its buying from non-SA sources, while imposing direct cut-backs in production in its own SA mines. The diamonds which it buys but cannot sell are then stock-piled, with the aim of releasing them later onto the market when they can be 'absorbed' without lowering the price.

In 1979 the inventory of diamonds in De Beers' vaults was put at \$570 million. But, as a result of the crisis of 1980-82, the inventory rose to \$1 700 million.

To finance operations and such immense stocks during a "very testing time" (as Oppenheimer put it), De Beers has been able to rely on its enormous financial reserves, held to a large extent in short-term investments which can readily be converted into cash.

At the end of 1982, De Beers' total investments **outside** the diamond industry were valued at R3 400 million. Such assets have been built up through the enormous profitability of De Beers during "good years"—when profits are said to equal 60% of revenues! No wonder the American *Fortune* magazine has ranked De Beers as the sixteenth most profitable company outside the USA.

Closures

To keep up profits during the recession, the De Beers bosses closed several mines in SA, as well as one in Lesotho (a country whose abject dependent position under SA imperialism enabled them to treat it as part of their own SA domain for this purpose).

Mining at Koffiefontein was suspended; the Tweepad plant in Namaqualand was closed, as was the Annex Kleinsee plant; while the Letseng-la-Terai mine in Lesotho was declared "no longer economic" and was permanently shut down.

In addition, so-called "unavoidable reductions in staff" took place at "all levels". (Chairman's statement, April 1983.)

This was the typical behaviour of the capitalists, loading the burdens of their system's crisis onto the backs of the working class. But these events should also give a warning to all who imagine that either De Beers or diamonds are "forever" a passport to secure jobs or to "national" development in other countries.

What could well happen in future—especially in a deep world depression of capitalism—can easily be illustrated in relation to Botswana.

This country's diamond industry is in the hands of the Debswana

company—nominally a 50-50 partnership between De Beers and the Botswana government, but in reality an arrangement in which the SA monopoly provides the finance, expertise, management and decision-making power.

Fifteen years ago, mining and quarrying contributed a mere P200 000 a year to Botswana's economy. But, with the discovery of big diamond deposits at Orapa, Lethlakane and Jwaneng, the picture changed dramatically.

By 1980/1 mining and quarrying contributed P286 million, or 37% of the Gross Domestic Product.

The central position of diamonds in the economic life of Botswana under capitalism is further shown in the fact that, in 1982, export of diamonds made up 56% of total foreign exchange earnings. Beef, the traditional staple export, came next at only 20%.

One-third of the government's revenue in taxes comes from diamond mining. Moreover, especially with the major construction works at Orapa and Jwaneng, a large part of Botswana's construction industry, electrical supply and even commercial sectors must now be tied in with the diamond industry.

In this exceptionally poor and under-developed country—which imports even its milk and eggs from SA!—the recent development of diamond mining **appears** to many people as the beginning of an era of progressive industrial development. But, like a mirage in the desert, it will do little to satisfy Botswana's thirst for development.

Disaster

In fact, the country's extreme dependence now on diamonds could turn into a disaster with any big slump in the world market. Already, in the recent recession, there was a sharp deterioration in the balance of trade. The overall balance of payments, which dropped into the red in 1981, only recovered to reach a small surplus in 1982 thanks to an inflow of foreign investment largely attributable to De Beers.

The cut-back in diamond-buying by the CSO would already have hit



The Premier diamond mine.

Botswana hard, except for the fact that quotas are related to total production and the opening of the rich Jwaneng mine enabled Botswana to increase its total diamond sales even during the recession.

But the situation in a future slump is likely to be sharply reversed.

Again, no doubt, the first to be hammered would be the SA and Namibian mines of De Beers—and the SA and Namibian mineworkers. It should be remembered that, in the great depression of 1929-33, the diamond industry was the first casualty. **Oppenheimer closed down the Kimberley, Jagersfontein, Premier and Consolidated Diamond mines, throwing thousands out of work.**

This was despite pressure from the SA government ostensibly 'on behalf of' the white workers whose votes it needed. Oppenheimer declared that he was "not going to be pointed to as the Chairman of De Beers who saw it brought to bankruptcy and who kept Europeans employed to ruin the shareholders." (Quoted in *Africa Undermined*, p.135.)

Black workers didn't even rate a mention at that time. But now, as then, it is the interests of the capitalists which are decisive in every capitalist country, under every capitalist government. The lives and livelihoods of the working people count for nothing with them—except in so far as they may have to make allowances to secure their own survival in power.

In a future slump or depression, SA and Namibian miners would not be the only diamond workers hit.

At the time of the Great Depression, South Africa produced most of the world's diamonds, and De Beers could decisively cut the supplies to the world market by closing its own mines. But such has been the worldwide expansion of diamond mining since then, that SA now produces no more than 15-20%. Botswana itself now produces about the same. Immense further supplies of diamonds are potentially beyond De Beers' control.

It seems inconceivable that, in a future world capitalist depression,

Botswana's mines, as well as those of other countries, would be saved from closure.

The extreme dependence of a number of weak economies on diamonds would mean tremendous social crisis and political upheavals accompanying such steps. The unstable governments of the 'Third World' would come under immense pressure to try to avoid closing the mines, by breaking away from De Beers and CSO control and selling directly on the world market.

Flooding

Therefore an inherent prospect in the situation would be an uncontrolled flooding of the market and a possible collapse of the age-old 'magic' of the diamond as symbol and embodiment of wealth. It is difficult to predict whether, once that had happened, the position of the diamond could again be restored.

Oppenheimer's insistent claim that the diamond has a long-term future as a "store of value" for the rich has no scientific basis. It depends entirely on the maintenance of De Beers' monopoly control through the CSO.

As we have seen, the development of the capitalist system—and with it monopoly capitalism—raised diamonds and the diamond myth to spectacular heights. Now the senile sickness of world capitalism carries within it the prospect of the diamond's fall from grace.

This perspective should be taken fully into account by the diamond-industry workers, and indeed all workers in diamond-producing countries, in organising themselves against the bosses.

In the short-term the urgent need is for international links and the preparation of a common program of self-defence, so that De Beers and the other diamond companies cannot divide up the workers and smash their resistance piecemeal during a crisis.

In particular, to organise against such a powerful employer as De Beers, which has such vast financial reserves and powerful government backing, the widest unity of workers is vital.

Equally vital is a clear understanding of how quickly the crisis of

capitalism can change the situation and turn the apparently charmed life of the diamond industry into a nightmare.

Ultimately there will be no security for workers in any industry until they have built the strength of their organisations and the whole labour movement to the point where they can take over power from the capitalist governments and nationalise the monopolies under workers' control and management.

Indeed, it is the socialist revolution, in South Africa, Southern Africa as a whole, and throughout the capitalist world, which alone can put the working people in a position to carry forward the development of economy and society so as to ensure security and abundance for all.

Paradoxically that will also spell the end of the strange role of the diamond—which, when no longer a symbol of ruling-class wealth, would lose its social magic.

If the socialist revolution takes place in South and Southern Africa before capitalism in the advanced countries of the West is overthrown, then diamond mining, like gold mining, would have to be sustained. Like the Bolsheviks in Russia after the revolution, so workers' governments in Southern Africa would need every resource and weapon—including those provided by the world capitalist economy itself—for their survival against the imperialist powers.

But the position would change rapidly with the carrying through of socialist revolutions in Europe and America—the centres of world capitalism.

Lenin

Lenin, when speaking of the changes that would come about through socialist world revolution, pointed out that gold would cease to play its old role as the money commodity and the ultimate underpinning of the international money system and world trade (a role which gold still has, although very indirectly, under capitalism today).

He thought it might then be a good idea to use gold for the plumbing in public lavatories, so that people would swiftly rid themselves of old social prejudices about the metal in-

culcated by capitalism and even pre-capitalist society!

Quite possibly, of course, both gold and diamonds would retain some more elevated usefulness in socialist society (apart from their limited use in industry)—perhaps in the realm of the art and architecture of society. That is a matter that can safely be left to the workers' democracies of the future to resolve.

What is certain, however, is that every worker who labours in the gold and diamond industries today would be secured employment and a better future through the tremendous all-round expansion of industries and services which the socialist transformation of society will bring.

Thus, the working class need not be in the least disturbed by the thought that neither Oppenheimer, nor De Beers, nor diamonds themselves are "forever".

Two views of a De Beers "Partnership"

When Zimbabwean Prime Minister Robert Mugabe visited Debswana's mine at Orapa recently, he could not find words adequate to praise this 'partnership' between De Beers (the South African monopoly) and the government of Botswana.

Describing it as "attractive and significant" and a "harmonious and successful marriage", Mugabe said the example could be emulated by Zimbabwe. Such a 'partnership' of private enterprise and a capitalist state apparently accords fully with his own idea of 'socialism'.

"Keep up this excellent work. Keep up this partnership with the state," he continued in his speech, before flying back to Harare with some presentation diamonds.

Debswana workers, on the other hand, take a somewhat different view of the 'partnership'. "De Beers is the real government of Botswana," they often remark.

JWANENG: Conditions at a De Beers showpiece mine

By Mpho Moremi

You come upon Jwaneng suddenly, at the end of a long, straight road that reaches 100km from Kanye into the thorn-bushes and pale sand of the Kalahari.

Where four years ago there was only bush, there is now a mine and a town. Everything is brand new: the tarred roads, concrete drains, street lights, shops, banks, school, hospital, police station, town hall, and row upon row of housing, painted yellow and white, gleaming in the hot sun.

This is a diamond town, built on diamonds and strictly run for the purpose of mining diamonds. Thirty metres under the sand lies one of the largest and richest deposits of gemstones in the world.

A massive investment has gone in here, because Debswana (the company which owns the mine and town) expects massive profits in double-quick time. The mine is likely to be exhausted in 20 years.

Debswana is a 50-50 partnership between the Botswana government and De Beers—but the real financial power and decision-maker is De Beers.

Debswana has invested P436 million (a Pula equals a Rand) so far, mainly in Jwaneng and in its other two mines at Orapa and Letlhakane. To date these mines have produced 40 million carats of diamonds (a carat is 0.2 gram)—which, at current world prices, adds up to four times the amount invested!

By 1985 the value of a single year's production will equal the total investment so far.

With only 4 200 workers (1 500 of them at Jwaneng) producing such immense wealth for the company, it is little wonder that Debswana can boast of providing better conditions and wages to the workers than any other industry, without so much as



A skilled worker at Jwaneng

denting its profits.

A semi-skilled worker at Jwaneng gives this account of conditions there:

"The majority of the workers are Batswana. About 10% of the staff, mainly managers, technicians and artisans, are expatriates.

"Everything is geared for maximum production. The mine keeps going in shifts, 24 hours a day for six days a week, from Monday to Saturday.

"The morning shift starts at 5 a.m. The company provides buses for carrying us between the residential area and the mine. Some of the buses operating inside the mine do not have seats or enough hand-grips. This is a subject of complaint.

"Many times in the mornings workers fail to make it to the buses in time, and have to walk to the mine. Disciplinary action is usually taken for reporting late. For the first offence it is a verbal warning, recorded.

"In production we work 48 hours a week. The administration staff work 44 hours, but the office cleaners and tea servers have to work 48. One Saturday in a month is given as a day off for all workers.

"We are given only 15 minutes for a lunch break. This is not enough

time to eat. There is also no time to wash before eating. Workers often just extend the lunch break by a few minutes—but they have to make sure they are not seen by the foreman.

"Workers are divided into different grades, from A up to E. Grade A is the unskilled workers; Grade B the semi-skilled; Grade C the artisans; and so on up to management. Wages and living conditions depend on your grade.

"The wages in Grade A range from P186 to P216 per month. They were previously P139 - P162, but went up from June 1983 as a result of a new agreement with the BMWU." (Botswana Mining Workers' Union.)

Low as these wages are, they are double the new minimum wage laid down in government Regulations (29/11/83) for other industrial workers in Botswana. These are to get **48 thebe (cents) an hour**. That would amount to a mere P23 a week, or P99 a month, for workers working a 48-hour week! Watchmen get 37 thebe an hour.

Clearly Independence has not brought much to Botswana's workers under the capitalist system,

Because of the higher wages paid

by Debswana, the workers there are not at present voicing any major grievance on this issue. There is, however, a strong complaint among the skilled workers about unfair treatment, as the worker at Jwaneng explains:

"In the higher grades, in which some expatriates are employed, there are huge salary differences between Batswana and them. In Grade C, for instance, a Motswana earns P687 as against P1 800 for an expatriate.

"There are also complaints by the locals that they are prevented from improving their skills and grades by the expatriates, who are trying to protect their positions."

Debswana provides accommodation to all its workers at Jwaneng.

"The housing depends on your grade. In the higher grades there are not many complaints about the housing, but the unskilled Grade A workers who live in single quarters are really suffering.

"These quarters are known as 'Robben Island'. They consist of blocks, each with five rooms, and two workers to every room. There is no sitting room, kitchen or toilet.

"Away from the housing there is a block with toilet and washing facilities. It is used by all workers in the Grade A single quarters. In the morning one finds about ten workers lining up under the showers while others wait for their turn.

"The company deducts P6 a month from the wages as rent for this accommodation.

"No visitors are allowed into these quarters without authorisation by the company, and even then they are only given a few hours to be in the area. Often there are raids by the company police. If visitors are found after the specified hours, they are thrown out and disciplinary action is taken against the workers involved.

"Working mothers are allocated a room to themselves only for the first 6 months after giving birth. They are not permitted to accommodate anybody to look after the babies while they are working.

"Conditions for married workers are much better. The Grade A married quarters consist of a house for each family, with two bedrooms, a sitting room, a small kitchen and a toilet. For this, P12 a month is deducted as rent. Housing gets better as one goes up the grades. The rent increases as well.

"Married people cook and eat at home. The workers in single quarters

have to eat at the mess. The housing areas are separated according to grade. The A and B Grade single quarters are in different areas, and so the messes are also separate, although the food is much the same.

"Workers get breakfast and supper at the mess, and are given lunch packs to eat at the mine. Until June 1983 we had to pay only P8 a month for food, but since the wage increase this has gone up to P20.

"Health facilities here are quite good. There have been few accidents at the mine. There are sports facilities available, and also a community hall for entertainment."

So far these conditions have resulted in workers' organisation at the mine getting off to a slow start. The widespread poverty and unemployment in Botswana makes Debswana workers all the more cautious about risking their jobs.

However, it is clear that the unskilled workers especially have strong grievances over their living conditions, and know that their wages leave a lot to be desired. All grades of workers are driven extremely hard through long working hours, without proper rest, for the sake of the company's profits. With a well-organised and united workforce, it should be possible to win important concessions from this employer.

Unfortunately workers are obstructed by the present, timid and pro-government leaders of the BMWU. The recent increase in basic wages resulted not from any real pressure from the union, but from

the readiness of the management, in a strong financial position, to give the union leaders something to keep their members quiet, and so avoid any movement from below.

There is a very widespread distrust of the union and lack of interest in its affairs among the mineworkers at Jwaneng, and this is typical in Debswana. The workers regard the union leaders as unwilling and unable to fight.

Even the management gives the game away in its December 1983 issue of *Debswana Review*, where it goes into raptures about its "very good relationship" with the union—and then wonders out loud if the relationship is not so "very good" that the union might be regarded by some people as a "puppet"!

What is needed is for workers to take up the task of building the union, from the pit up, as a democratic organisation under their own control, with leaders elected who are ready to make sacrifices and show initiative to organise and defend their class.

Even in the conditions at Jwaneng, this could quickly win the support of most workers, once they see the BMWU being changed into a genuine workers' organisation, really belonging to them.

In the present state of disorganisation, the management's skilful tactics of dividing up the workers—not only into the usual wage categories according to skill, but also with vastly different housing conditions physically separated from each other—have had some effect in creating suspicion



Debswana general manager M.H. Smith, De Beers chairman Harry Oppenheimer, and Botswana President Q. Masire at the official opening of the Jwaneng mine.

between the different grades.

Unskilled workers—who are the most vulnerable to being fired—tend to doubt whether the more skilled grades would support them in a struggle. This has weakened their own will to act.

The foundation for a strong union at the mine must be the unskilled, for they are many and have the most urgent need for organisation to improve conditions. But they will need to create unity from the start with the higher grade workers as well, if they are to be sure of winning demands in any confrontation with such a power-

ful employer as De Beers.

To begin with, limited and specific demands should be carefully chosen, including demands which would appeal to all workers in their own interests. So, for instance, the A Grade workers' demand for at least a room each in the single quarters, or for higher basic pay, could be coupled with a demand for a half-hour or hour lunch break, for shorter working hours for all without loss of pay, for an end to wage discrimination, and so on.

In this way the B and C Grades at least could be drawn into a united

campaign, and would realise that they too have everything to gain and nothing to lose from organisation and from helping to strengthen the unskilled workers. That could be the beginning of a strong union branch at Jwaneng.

From the beginning, too, workers should find ways of linking with the growing National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa, to discuss common problems and demands—for it is the same mine bosses who are exploiting their labour in both countries. The NUM in SA should also seek links from its side.

Next issue: "LESSONS OF THE 1950s"

The launching of the United Democratic Front in August last year was enthusiastically welcomed by hundreds of thousands of oppressed working people — as an opportunity to unite the movement all over South Africa in a struggle against the state.

The UDF is clearly seen as part of the revival of the ANC inside the country — as a forerunner for the future re-emergence of the ANC openly at the head of the mass political movement.

But the failure of the UDF leadership to mobilise the movement on a clear nation-wide action program has already become obvious. The UDF's overwhelmingly middle-class leadership — with a luke-warm attitude towards mass struggle — feel safer with 'mass' *petitioning* campaigns than with mobilising the millions of organised and unorganised working-class people in action.

Because they are not prepared to link the struggle against apartheid with the struggle to overthrow capitalism, they shrink from the revolutionary implications of a workers' movement fully aroused and conscious of its tasks.

Inqaba calls on organised workers to go into the UDF, consciously to build it as a mass organisation of the working class, and to lead it on an action program in which the workers' social and political demands are put foremost and not diluted.

As we face a new period of mass political struggle in South Africa, it is important to learn all we can from the experience of the 1950s. At that time, too, there was a tremendous upsurge in the black working-class movement, with hundreds of thousands prepared to struggle and sacrifice to win trade-union and political rights.

At that time, too, the political movement was led by Congress — and by leaders with very much the

same policies and outlook as the UDF today.

What happened then — and what lessons can we draw from it?

The next issue of *Inqaba* (No. 13) will be a special pamphlet devoted to the "LESSONS OF THE 1950s".

- ★ It will describe the rise of the ANC in the period of mass resistance to the National Party government.
- ★ It will examine the role and policies of the ANC leaders — and also the Communist Party leaders, who, far from explaining the need to direct the movement against the capitalist system, urged compromises with the liberal capitalists at every crucial stage.
- ★ It will show how the fire of the awakening working-class was repeatedly damped down by these leaders and opportunities to extend the movement squandered.
- ★ It will show why and how the black-nationalist opposition to Congress emerged at the end of the 1950s, and why the PAC split-off only contributed to the defeat of the movement.
- ★ It will show how the outcome of the struggles in the 1950s could have been different if a Marxist tendency had been built in the Congress movement at that time, struggling for clear and correct policies and leadership to guide the movement.
- ★ It will examine the policy of sabotage and guerilla warfare that the ANC, CP and SACTU leaders turned to after Sharpeville, and why this has proved a dead-end.

Finally, the pamphlet will sum up the main political lessons that, we believe, need to be drawn from the 1950s, to help ensure that our movement in the 1980s is not shipwrecked again, but can go forward to victory.

We hope to publish this special pamphlet-issue of Inqaba during April. Subscribers will receive copies in the usual way.



MONONO'A BONA — MASAPO A RONA

"SA executive does all right," announced the *Sunday Times* in a little item tucked away in the business section on 11 December. "South African executives have substantially more cash to blow than their counterparts in Belgium, the Netherlands and Britain,"—although, poor souls, a bit less than the big bosses in France, Germany or the USA.

The average managing director of a big manufacturing firm in SA has R28 000 a year in hand for spending sprees—buying cars, videos, holidays overseas, and "eating out and other features of modern living".

That is *after* he has paid the tax man, and *after* "essential living costs of R22 000 have been settled." Essential living costs!

Well, how about that as a starting-point for the trade unions in this year's wage negotiations?

Still, you can't help feeling sorry for the bosses, you know. Things just aren't going all their own way any more. Firstly, they've been saddled with trade unions which organise their workers and interfere with "management's natural right to manage", as it's called. Now even the government's Industrial Court harasses them with the occasional re-instatement of workers dismissed without cause.

When the Court ordered the Frame Group to re-instate 10 sacked workers recently, a certain L. Riggall of Kloof was beside himself over the sheer injustice of it. In a letter in the *Financial Mail* (13 January) he declared:

"Slavery has been abolished in theory, but in practice it is thriving, with employers as slaves of the workers, unable to free themselves. At least the slave-owners of the past paid a high price for their privilege, whereas the workers who exploit employers shackled to them (why should they bother to work efficiently, if they cannot be dismissed?) have paid nothing for their privilege."

When, one of these days, the workers 'free' the employers from all these problems by taking over the factories and other means of production, L. Riggall will be able to console his friends with the thought that, after all, they had nothing to lose but their chains.

After Britain's Princess Anne made a 'fact-finding' trip to West Africa, she came up with the solution to the area's problems. The Sahel region is populated by 400 000 people, many of whom, including 4 000 children, are expected to die of starvation before the next harvest of millet.

The severe drought has continued since 1968, but according to Princess Anne the solution is to: "Go to church, get out the prayer mats, and start praying." She goes on to say: "Money is not the answer, nor would be sending part of the West's grain surplus—they don't eat that sort of stuff."

'Have you ever noticed how in countries where millionaires flourish ordinary people themselves tend to live better?' said Harry Oppenheimer recently to Patrice Claude of the French daily newspaper, *Le Monde*. He had South Africa in mind as an example.

It didn't bother him that he possesses six personal 'residences' while hundreds of thousands are homeless—or that he spends as much in a month on his hobby of breeding race-horses as would keep 100 poor families well fed for a year.

"Contrary to the notion skilfully peddled...by Oppenheimer's devotees," writes Claude, "democracy is not really his cup of tea. He displays a token belief in it...but cannot really be described as a convinced democrat. He is frightened by what he calls 'numerical democracy'—in other words, by the teeming masses.

"The overnight granting of voting rights to all South African adults would, he claims, inevitably lead to 'chaos and disorder'—both of which are more of a threat to his business interests than is apartheid."

If everyone had to get a vote, it should not be done "any old how. It would have to be done within the framework, for instance, of a federation, with its own constitution, which would provide cast-iron guarantees for the white minority." (By which he means, cast-iron guarantees for the property of the capitalists.)

So there we have it: behind the mask of a 'democratic' opponent of apartheid, the hard and cunning face of an exploiter. But isn't that true of all the 'liberals' and 'democrats' of the capitalist class?

WITH MOVES again taking place towards a "settlement" over Namibian independence, the question of control of the state power in Namibia if South African troops withdraw becomes crucial.

The strategists of imperialism—in Pretoria as well as Washington—want above all to prevent revolutionary upheavals in Namibia which would expose their retreat as weakness and spur on the mass movement in South Africa itself.

But they have been unable to create in Namibia the locally-based armed forces which could guarantee the defence of capitalist property and privilege against the demands of the workers and peasants there.

This is one of the reasons South Africa has repeatedly sabotaged settlement moves—and why 'linkage' with the issue of Cuban troops in neighbouring Angola was insisted on by the Americans. The regime has been desperately trying, over the past two years especially, to make up for lost time by building an indigenous state machinery in Namibia, including a 'South-West Africa Territorial Force' (SWATF) on which it hopes to rely.

While the special SAP unit, Koevoet, does most of the dirty work of torture, murder and intimidation against the Namibian population, SWATF is supposed to "win their hearts and minds". Its failure in this is

nowhere better proved than by the case in February of the SWATF soldiers fined R50 for spit-roasting a 63-year-old man and then throwing him into the coals.

There is also another side to Pretoria's problem. As a report to *Inqaba* from a white South African conscript recently on 'the border' shows, many unemployed Namibians who support SWAPO join the SWATF out of the need to make a living. They will certainly not provide a reliable basis for capitalist rule—which will prove very unstable in an independent Namibia, even with South Africa threatening from across its border.

"50% of the black soldiers support SWAPO"

—a South African conscript



"After my 12 weeks' basic training, I was sent to the border. I was pole-axed about the news. As it turned out it wasn't so bad, but it could have been quite heavy for a lot of people.

All the information you get is incorrect about the border. You don't know what to expect. The way we were dumped on the border was quite atrocious.

At Grootfontein none of us were armed. Your rifles belong to your camp. You feel wierd trudging through SWA unescorted—and then having no rifle when two men were attacked shows how unconcerned they were for you.

At that time I didn't know a SWA army existed. No-one tells you you're not in the SA army any more—just all of a sudden you are in the SWA army.

Suddenly you are called "leader group" even though you are a private with only basic training. It is their way of being racist without saying so. They don't say, "We want all the whites", but "the leader group".

The ratio of blacks to whites is 10 to 1. The blacks are recruited from

Namibia



Members of the Koevoet killer-squad at a base in the 'operational area'.

the indigenous population—mainly from the Kavangos. Word is put out they need soldiers.

The sergeant-major is told the number, say 200, and that morning there will be 500 at the gate. They sift through them quickly. To run 2,4 km is the standard test in the army.

They join because you can tell a soldier by his house; their life-style changes.

When I was there, there was only one black officer—and the whites had enough difficulty to salute him! A lot of SA corporals and NCOs complain about that.

They recruit Kavangos as NCOs. There is an incredible amount of racial tension between Kavango sergeants and South African corporals. In theory the black sergeant is superior to the white corporal, but their training is definitely not of the same standard. This results in a lot of resentment!

The whites were complaining they were doing the black's job although at a lower rank.

The SA soldiers are aware commitment from the black soldiers is lack-

ing. They are not politically motivated, but are in there only for the money.

They prefer to be in the bush, because then there is no discipline from the white corporals. They don't like to think of killing SWAPO, but it is better in the bush.

If you have no contact with SWAPO then there is no possibility of being killed and you still get your salary.

Almost no mixing

In the camps there is almost no mixing. Religiously whites stick to certain tables and are most upset if a black comes and sits down by them. The tents are all together—but one is white, one black, and so on. All the whites go to the NCOs' shower.

In theory a black corporal could give a white troop an order, but in practice no white would accept an

order. Whites are protected as they have a particular role to play.

The South African soldiers say that 50% of the black soldiers support SWAPO. I know two who were caught out. One was a driver, one was a radio operator.

The driver was caught using a SA army vehicle to transport guerrillas. He had been in the army for five years!

Koevoet sees it as their job to catch SWAPO supporters in the army. They try to find out which troops are not shooting SWAPO. But most of the black troops are not interested in war. The population is becoming increasingly supportive of SWAPO, so why shouldn't the soldiers?

A lot of them have brothers, family fighting on the right side. They say all the right things—"Yes, if I ever saw my brother, I'd shoot him"—but they wouldn't.

Families are cut down the middle. If there are three brothers, one might be in the army and two in SWAPO.

Generally speaking, those in the SWA army do not have strong persuasions. If they are into the war, they go into Koevoet.

In the operations room there is a big sign saying the aims and objectives are: to commit good deeds among the population; to become a fighting battalion; and to be a showpiece for overseas visitors!

They are not ashamed—that is a stated objective. There is a beautiful tea area near the parade ground. About once a week an amazing lunch is set out for visiting dignitaries from America or West Germany.

Also the army makes money from straight tourism. Germans, I think, come to the battalions to have a look. I think they are simply rich tourists. The aim is to drum home the fact that a SWA army exists.

Some Kavangos are being drafted into the army as 'national servicemen'. Someone, when showing his pass book, gets written in it: "Eligible for national service". Then he can't escape, because the next time he has to show his pass he has to go to the army.

The only way he can get a new pass is by completing his service.

There is no stigma attached to black soldiers in the army. In some areas just about every family has a soldier."

Women and squatters are scapegoats in police "Operation Clean-up"

LAST OCTOBER, more than 3 000 men, women and children were arrested in Harare in a sudden police crackdown on "suspected prostitutes, squatters and beggars in the city". They were detained under the infamous Vagrancy Act passed by the white Rhodesian government in 1960, and were thus denied access to the courts.

Most of the women held were not prostitutes, but students, nurses, industrial workers, domestic workers, unemployed women and schoolgirls—picked up at whim, not only by the police, but also by soldiers and sometimes by ZANU Youth Brigades.

According to government spokesman Eddison Zvobgo, the decision for 'Operation Clean-up' was made by the party Central Committee. The blitz spread beyond Harare—in Mutare there was even a case of 200 women workers being picked up on their way to work at the Liebig's factory.

Those arrested who could not immediately produce documentary proof that they were married or employed were sent for indefinite detention in barbed-wire camps at Mushumbi Pools, in the hot and unhealthy conditions of the Zambezi Valley. Labelled as "prostitutes", many of the women detained have complained of sexual abuse by soldiers.

These events make a mockery of the Zimbabwean government's claim to champion the rights of women and defend the interests of the poor.

Prostitution cannot be ended by attacking prostitutes, but by first changing the social conditions which can drive women to become prostitutes. It is the growing poverty and unemployment in Zimbabwe which leaves increasing numbers of women destitute.

But these conditions will continue to worsen so long as the government maintains its policy of compromising with the capitalists. What is needed is the socialist transformation of society.

Prime Minister Robert Mugabe defended the mass arrests, admitting only that some 'innocent' people had been netted in error. According to *The Herald* (27/12/83), "He said prostitutes must learn to live by their own sweat, by working for their bread, 'and we can provide as many jobs as possible'".

But the interviews with Zimbabwean women published here show how utterly false is the suggestion that jobs are available for those who want to work.

The government's attack on squatters results also from its policy of defending capitalism in Zimbabwe—its failure to take over the land and industries from the rich and so begin to provide jobs, land and housing to meet the people's needs.

The Zimbabwean magazine *Moto* (December/January) correctly remarks that 'Operation Clean-up' is a "scapegoating campaign" and "part of an ongoing offensive to stigmatise ... socially deprived groups such as vagrants and squatters, seen as threats to the new propertied classes."

Activists in ZANU and the trade union movement should firmly oppose such tactics of the government which can only confuse and divide working people. The first step in a *real* Operation Clean-up would involve mobilising the workers to clean capitalism out of Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe

A young Harare woman who was picked up by plain-clothes police during 'Operation Clean-up' told *INQABA* what happened to her:

I was waiting for the bus at the bus stop at about 9 p.m. and there came a car and they said: "Would you like a lift?"

I said, "No".

They drove a short distance, and then turned back and stopped opposite the bus stop. The driver came to me and said he's a policeman, and he showed me an identity card and he had a radio.

He asked me, "Have you a husband?"

I said, "Yes".

Then he said, "Come with us. We want to go to your husband and see your wedding certificate. If you don't have one we will take you to the police camp."

At first I refused to go with them, then the driver pushed me into the car and I had to show them the way to our house. When we were at the corner I said, "We must go this way". But the driver did not listen.

So I opened the door, saying, "I am getting off". I was very frightened.

The driver stopped and got out, closed the door and locked me in. Then we started to drive and again he turned the wrong way.

I tried the other door and found it was locked and also the one in front. So I jumped out the window. And I don't know what happened. When I woke at 4 a.m. I had been moved from where I jumped.

I was at the side of the road and there was a man passing through and I said, "I want to go to the hospital". He helped me. I was covered in blood.

I spent one night in hospital. I was wounded all over the shoulder, arms, side, knees, legs and toes—and my face and hands are cut.

It is said that the police are pick-

Women's rights attacked

ing up women because they are prostitutes. But I heard most of the women taken by the police were married, few are single.

These arrests are meant to threaten women. Some women have been dumping babies because they have no way of supporting them.

To give women some jobs will help. If women get jobs they won't be prostitutes.

Then there were the squatters also. What they did to them was just rude, saying they were thieves. The police just took them in a van to the rural areas or, if they had no place to go, to the government co-operatives. Also to Chikurubi prison. Now some are back in the places they were kicked out of.

Before Mugabe was voted in he said everyone would be given houses but instead there are more and more squatters. It is very difficult to get houses. Most workers lodge; most in one room. A lodger pays \$14 or more in rent. It is too much.

Other people attacked were the sadza vendors. Most were squatters at Harare market. They had no jobs and nowhere to get money.

Even if you have a husband who is working the prices are too high because you are on the minimum wage. Prices just go up.

The most common jobs for women

are work in houses, to work in hospitals as sweepers, and selling clothes in shops. Few women have qualifications.

Things can be changed only by giving jobs. But in Zimbabwe today we won't get jobs. Maybe under a socialist Zimbabwe we can. What did the prostitutes and squatters do to make the economy go down?

If you are a socialist you'll think very hard about the way things are going.

Comment by a prostitute in Harare after the police blitz:

It showed the people that the government does not consider women's place in the society. Many women are prostitutes because they have been divorced and been kicked out by the husbands with the children.

Who is going to look after these children except the mother? Where can she find money when there are no jobs? The easiest thing is prostitution.

I voted for this government, but I find myself still oppressed.

What is more, the police also like to while away time with the prostitutes. In the blitz the lucky prostitutes were tipped off.

It is a very insecure position all women find themselves in. We would all like to get jobs and lead a steady-going life, but there are no jobs. I believe every woman wants to be able to be settled and have children and have a decent job.

Demand jobs, homes, socialist policies to solve problems

This letter appeared in *The Herald* on 28/11/83:

SIR — We disagree with the practice of arresting single women as prostitutes.

How do the police know someone is a prostitute unless they have seen men going to her? And why don't they arrest the men too, or is it a crime for the women only?

If they have not seen the men, then why do they arrest women for just walking down the street?

We must be free to walk alone without fear of the police.

But also, we don't just blame the prostitutes, we blame the situation which forces women into this.

Many women are divorced by their

husbands and become prostitutes because they need the money to feed themselves and their children. Until these women get maintenance from their husbands, and can get other jobs themselves, what are they to do?

We do not agree with prostitution, but we say the whole social situation must be looked at to stop the causes of prostitution.

It is not the answer for the police to go around arresting any woman they see, just in case she is a prostitute.

**Zanu Women's League,
Kubatana branch.**

A woman from the rural areas speaks about conditions there:



I stay in Bikita (in south-eastern Zimbabwe), while my husband works in Harare. During the war it was a hard life. Now it's a little better.

I have two children, both boys. Our house is built with poles cut down from trees, and with clay. There is a dam near us so we had dug our well near the dam.

We stay in rural areas, not on farms. Farms are for whites only.

Men help their wives in all kinds of work at home—ploughing, building houses. But a few don't help their wives.

These years we were not allowed to cut down trees, so it's hard to build houses or look for firewood. You are allowed to take dry wood, but dry wood is very few.

Most young men look for work,

some in town, some on farms. Women usually don't look for jobs. They are instructed to stay home doing work. Or they work on farms.

The drought has killed a lot of cattle and crops. Some people were sick because of hunger. So we were given some mealie-meal by the government. But it caused hatred between people because those who were sharing out the rations favoured their own relatives.

Councillors

So one can get a bag of mealie-meal and others get a bucket of it. Also the councillors stole much mealie-meal to sell it somewhere.

There are Zanu Women's Leagues in the rural areas. You don't have to join, but you are forced to pay 40 cents for fees of the league. I am secretary of our nearest league.

Many poor and starving people from Mozambique have come into Zimbabwe to look for work and food. Some are in Chipinga, and some on tea estates. Some work in houses as house girl earning \$2 a month.

They are starving and have nowhere to stay. That is why they work for \$2 a month. He or she will be given a place to stay and some food.

In rural areas a 50 kg. bag of roller meal costs \$15. In town it costs \$10. Sometimes the shopkeeper refuses to sell a whole bag for a person, so he will take a plate, then sell a plate for 50 cents.

Many young women are worried about life. How prices have gone up, pay taxes wherever you stay, school fees go up. There are no jobs. People are very hungry.



Starving Mozambicans work on farms in Zimbabwe for little or no pay.

Letters from Zimbabwe

Dear Comrades,

The Independence brought joy to everyone of course. Even to me. This joy did not prevail as was supposed. It meant only joy and getting rich with the elite only.

Why I say so is because when the workers of the HUBC bus company in Harare went on strike many lost their jobs. No compensation nor any assistance whatsoever was given by the government on this issue. Nurses and teachers were beaten up and some were locked in.

In all these cases it is the working class which is suffering. The strikes were said to be illegal—the same statement which a raw capitalist would vomit.

The living conditions of the working class are drastically falling. I would like comrades who are for the Marxist ideas to know this.

In Hungani or St. Mary's and at Seke Unit D where the Apostolic Faith people reside—twice I have walked round and twice I had felt near tears when I saw how my own people were striving when others were flying and doing nothing for the working people.

The comrades whom I had walked with always pointed out the same facts which I had pointed out—stinking toilets, poor housing and very poor water sources, very poor means of cooking, crowded houses some with sun-dried bricks, others built with wood all over.

I interviewed one person who said: "For me to make a living I have to rely much on handicraft. I make dishes, cooking utensils and some baskets. These I sell in places in or out of Harare. Transport is expensive because of the rising costs of fuel. It is a hard life because everything is just soaring high."

He is not the only one. There are many who lead such a way of life. The houses are not at all suitable for a being to live in. The roof itself just shows that any time it can collapse. The cracks in the walls are of no good. There are no windows but just small openings which means there is limited ventilation. This as we all know can encourage bacterial or



Conditions in Seke

fungal growth. This leads to the spreading of many diseases.

The water source in one area is just a tap for all. The place is not protected for water to be taken in the pipes safely. The taps form pools which encourage breeding of mosquitos which leads to malarial and yellow fever dispersal.

In cooking there is always wood but what in the rainy season? The government should build people proper houses and have the houses electrified.

The houses are very crowded and this leads to the spreading of infectious diseases. Instead of solving the workers' conditions the municipality has built a beerhall to take money away. But the elite has a large area to itself. Why cannot the workers have the same rights? The beerhall is just in shambles. These are the problems which our people, the working class are under.

(Student)
Seke

Dear Comrades,

Insults, low pay, long hours of work is the price one caretaker at a block of flats has to pay for holding the job.

Despite 14 years of loyalty the worker is still receiving the minimum wage of \$105 a month. Being a married man with four children he is supposed to school, feed, travel to work daily on the little he gets.

He is not only a caretaker, but also has experience in plumbing and painting. For this he gets nothing in return.

Sometimes he has to work late on blocked toilets. But confrontation with the boss would only result in the worker being told to move, as the boss might easily pick any man in the street to do the work.

The boss seems not to notice the worker's long years of service. He got next to nothing for his bonus. After

painting a block of ten flats the boss showed his "deep gratitude" by giving the worker \$2.00 for a coke!

The worker said he could not believe his eyes, and he nearly punched the boss.

This is just one of the problems facing most domestic workers, exploitation by the bosses. It is surprising, since the worker is a member of the Domestic Allied Workers' Union. This shows that there are not close links between the workers and the leadership of the Union.

It is now up to the workers to organise themselves and see to it that the Union stands for their well being in the workplaces. If this is achieved, we can end exploitation from the unscrupulous bosses, be they black or white.

Zeph Maposa
Harare

Military coup in Nigeria

When Nigeria, Black Africa's economic giant, fell under a military coup on New Year's eve it showed that no 'Third World' country is stable. If any country on the African continent was to escape from mass poverty, it would have been Nigeria.

It has vast reserves of oil, other minerals and fertile agricultural land. It has a large domestic market; over 90 million. One in every four black Africans is Nigerian.

Upheavals

Yet since independence in 1960, Nigeria has suffered five military coups, an horrific civil war which left tens of thousands dead, two general strikes, local rebellions and widespread disorder.

It was probably fear of renewed turmoil that prompted this latest military coup. Early reports seem to indicate that there is no fundamental class difference between the new regime and the civilian government it toppled.

What finally pushed the plotters into action was the announcement on 29 December of severer austerity measures, cutbacks in spending and increases in tax. The day before the coup, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, "Many Nigerians fear that they are already at the beginning of a slippery slide into economic anarchy of the kind that has decimated Ghana over the past decade".

In Tunis the next week, tanks were

By Jim Chrystie

used to try and crush 'bread riots'. The Nigerian military decided to intervene before the situation deteriorated to this extent.

There are also reports that the senior officers decided to act in order to forestall a planned coup by junior officers with left-wing views.

Despite the reported 'popularity' of the coup, there has been no real welcome amongst the Nigerian workers and peasants for the return of the generals. They know only too well the corruption, arbitrary arrest, imprisonment of workers' leaders

and repression which existed under military rule before.

But neither was there any attempt to defend the corrupt civilian regime of President Shagari. By all accounts this coup was virtually bloodless.

Shagari had hired a public relations firm from the USA to project his regime's liberal image in the West, but for most people, reality was different. Last year's electoral victory was boosted by widespread fraud.

Nigerian novelist Wole Soyinka recently pointed out that in just one ward in his own town (voting population 10 000), the number of registered electors rose from 4 500 (1979) to 188 000 (1983)—and there are only 700 dwellings in the ward!

Political opponents were silenced, intimidated or bought off. Five of Shagari's critics within the ruling party were given N500m contracts to

Letter from Nigeria

Dear Comrades,

I was so happy to receive your publication, Inqaba ya Basebenzi. I was eagerly waiting to see such a day. And God made it possible on that fateful day (9/12/83).

Comrades, I want to assure you that we here in Nigeria, we are in the struggle with you in spirit if not in physical. I will devote my life to see that apartheid and capitalism is eliminated not in

South Africa or Nigeria alone, but all over the world.

Apartheid and capitalism are sisters and should not be seen to exist.

For the distribution of the magazine, I am ever ready to do that job. You can send as many as possible for me to sell and send you the money.

*Yours fraternally,
(A Nigerian comrade.)*

help build the new capital of the country at Abuja. (*Nigerian Daily Times*, 10 July, 1982. N1 = US \$1.42, or about R1.70.)

Whilst corruption has been endemic in all Nigeria's governments, civilian or military, what pushed the mass of Nigerians into hostility against the Shagari regime was the savage cutbacks in their living standards.

One of the earliest reports to come out of the country after the coup mentions looting in the town of Benin, and demands for the reduction in the price of staple foods. It is a total indictment of Nigeria's rulers that the price of basic foods such as yams is actually cheaper in London than it is in Lagos.

Recession and successive government austerity measures have resulted in inflation of over 100%, shortages of basic goods, and widespread layoffs. There are no reliable figures on unemployment, but one of the country's leading industrialists commented in December: "If everybody put down in black and white how many workers they had laid off and added them up, they would fall off their chairs".

Funds

In November, work on the Ajaokuta steel project (the largest industrial investment in black Africa) had to stop because the funds ran out. The new military regime has promised that now things will be different. But they have refused to say how, beyond the empty promise of all military regimes that they will "end corruption".

But Nigeria's problems arise from something far more fundamental than corruption of individual rulers. It stems from its oil-producing role within the international capitalist economy, and how it has been devastated by the recession.

Since the early 1970s, Nigeria's economy has been virtually dependent on oil. It provides 95% of export earnings and 80% of government revenue. The glut in the oil market because of recession in the industrialised West has been catastrophic for Nigeria. Its oil earnings slumped from \$22 400 million in 1980 to a forecast \$9 600 million

for 1983.

Nigeria cut back its production of oil by nearly half in four years and the price by 25%. If, as seems likely, the price of British North Sea oil is further reduced then Nigeria will have to slash its prices again.

The economy has plummeted during the 1980s. In 1981 Gross Domestic Product fell by 5.2%, in 1982 by a further 2.4%. The last three years have seen the country's foreign exchange reserves fall from \$10 billion to \$1 billion. It is estimated that the deficit on the balance of payments is running at about \$5 billion a year.

Worse

This year the economic situation will be even worse than 1983. In its December budget the civilian regime forecast total export earnings of N8.5 billion for 1984. But N3 billion will be eaten up in paying off debts to international finance, so that leaves just N5 billion for imports.

That means more savage cutbacks in industrial production as machine imports and goods will not be available. It is all a far cry from a decade ago when Nigeria's towns took on the appearance of gold-rush towns as get-rich-quick merchants fell over each other to cash in on the oil boom.

The oil industry itself only employs 6 000 people out of a total labour force of 30 million. The revenue generated was syphoned off through the state and para-statal organisations. Suddenly 'national unity' became the cry of Nigeria's elite. Nigeria was being transformed from a fragmented state structure where regional elites took the surplus from peasant production, to a centralised state system based upon the oil industry.

The newly rich elite cornered the fruits of the oil boom. Hi-fi imports increased 1 000% from 1973 to 1976. Colour television was launched whilst the poor languished in horror conditions in the shanty towns. By the spring of 1978, 97% of the business of Lagos Port was in imports, and only 3% in exports.

The anarchic nature of capitalist development even meant that by 1976 most petroleum used in Nigeria had to be imported in refined form. If



An oil worker in Nigeria.

fortunes could be made quickly, what need was there for planned industrial investment?

The elite wanted collaboration with foreign multi-nationals and introduced laws, such as the 1972 Indigenisation Decree, which stipulated that there should be a Nigerian presence on boards of companies operating in the country.

Multi-nationals

The multi-nationals did not complain too much. After all it was one way of recycling oil earnings into firms which remained under foreign control. The oil boom hurt other sections of the economy. The export of agricultural produce collapsed and today Nigeria is a net importer of food.

New manufacturing was neglected. Today manufacturing's share of the country's economy is lower than that in Kenya or even Tanzania. Development may have been sudden, but it was patchy and only exacerbated the country's existing social divisions.

The elite may have their colour TV, but the electricity supply is unreliable. Their luxury cars have to travel down poorly made-up roads, and their ultra-modern well-guarded

residences can often only be approached through the slums of the shanty towns. After midnight, Lagos is reportedly one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

In such a society there can be no stability. Four years ago, Kano, one of the main towns in the north, experienced mass riots as the unemployed and youth attacked the houses and cars of the rich. The civilian regime replied with bullets.

Elsewhere peasants driven off their land to make way for an irrigation scheme, which will benefit a few private farmers, have responded with armed resistance.

And workers have taken on the government and won. The last military regime disbanded the country's national union organisations in 1975 and introduced its own body. They banned strikes and jailed workers' leaders.

Seven years later, in 1982 their successors in government, Shagari's civilian regime, were faced with a general strike. Over 700 000 workers came out, and more joined them; after two days the government conceded.

Six months later when the government, facing bankruptcy, even considered lowering the minimum wage, a union protest stopped them. At Peugeot and Dunlop plants workers have moved into struggle.

It is the fear that struggles by the oppressed strata in Nigerian society could link up that scares the Nigerian bourgeoisie. Last year they expelled over two million 'foreign' workers, blaming them for the unemployment in Nigeria in an attempt to throw nationalist dust into the workers' eyes.

Nigeria is plundered by a chain of thieves: the multi-nationals and merchant banks, the local commercial and bureaucratic bourgeoisie, speculators and politicians.

Now the military have stepped in to get their cut of the corruption cake, and to be available to crack down on any opposition against new attacks on living standards.

The whole post-independence history of Nigeria has shown that capitalism has nothing to offer the mass of the people of the country. Now the dark night of military repression has returned in an attempt to forestall opposition of the oppressed against a corrupt system.

But bullets will not calm the social whirlwind which is now gathering its first stirrings in Nigeria.

Reprinted from Militant, the Marxist weekly paper in the British labour movement

Funeral in Moscow

Bells toll for bureaucracy



Heads of state, prime ministers, generals, dukes, bureaucrats and millionaires were all present at the funeral of Yuri Andropov.

Every one of the Eastern European Stalinist bureaucracies were represented, as were the governments of all the major capitalist powers of the West. The only ones without a *bona fide* representative at the ceremony were the workers, Russian or otherwise.

But like Banquo's Ghost, the Russian workers were present in one sense: in the nightmares and fears of the bureaucracy around Chernenko. The shroud of mystery around Andropov's year-long illness, the anxiety at the final announcement of his death, the hurried conclave of Politbureau members to appoint his successor, the secrecy, above all the thick veil of secrecy—all these point to their fear of any open discussion of

the political and economic implications of the succession, and any involvement by the working class in the affairs of state.

Behind the careful manoeuvres of the leading Russian bureaucrats lies a deep and intractable economic crisis. The Bureaucracy has felt the ground shift beneath its feet as it has become increasingly incapable of developing the economy and moving society forward.

The planned, state-owned economy is the only gain of the October Revolution that has remained intact to this day. But after 1923, with the revolution isolated in a backward, devastated country, a bureaucracy was able to consolidate itself, one characterised by its inefficiency, mismanagement, bloated privileges and the suppression of all the democratic rights of the workers.

The existence of a plan of production, despite the bureaucracy, meant that the economy of the USSR was able to develop at a huge rate—from the early 1920s to the present day, at a rate unmatched by capitalist countries. As Trotsky explained, after his own expulsion from Stalinised Russia, the superiority of a planned economy was written, not in academic or theoretical terms, but in the language of steel, railroads and cement.

But whereas the Bureaucracy was a relative fetter on production in the past—in the sense that the economy went ahead, although at a far greater cost than would have been necessary in a state with workers' democracy—as it developed the forces of production, the Bureaucracy became an absolute fetter.

Compulsion

It is one matter for a privileged caste to manage a backward, isolated economy by the methods of command and compulsion. But it is another question entirely to use such methods in a modern economy as Russia now is, where each industrial sector has developed tens of thousands of different products, processes and techniques, with highly complex inter-relationships between them and other sectors. The more complex has become the economy, the more the Kremlin Bureaucracy have become an obstacle to its further development.

This explains the fear of the Bureaucracy around Chernenko: they have no independent relationship to the means of production, and can only maintain their position by fraud and repression. But whereas in the past the Bureaucracy could achieve a

measure of stability by the growth in production and living standards, they are increasingly unable to develop the economy as in the past.

Economic figures indicate a slowing down of the rate of economic growth throughout the 1970s, as the mismanagement of the Bureaucracy has taken a greater toll. Despite massive investment in agriculture, for example—now 27 per cent of all investment, and planned to rise to 33 per cent—about a third of the total crop is lost through waste and mis-planning.

The economy can produce 550 000 tractors, but each year almost the same number break down. Although more than 80 per cent more acreage is used for agriculture as compared to the USA, only about 70 per cent as much crop is produced annually.

The only way this could be changed so it would make a fundamental difference—and it is something quite beyond the bureaucracy itself to achieve—would be *political revolution*, that is the overthrow of the bureaucracy giving the workers control of the state and the economy.

For Marxists, workers' control and management in a state-owned economy is not a sentimental question—it is a vital necessity for the development of the economy. The active involvement of all workers in planning and management is as necessary for the modern Russian economy as oxygen is to a living body.

The Bureaucracy have been looking over their shoulders during the 'leadership crisis', for fear that the workers will raise their own independent voice. Andropov was not as long in power as was Stalin, but the Kremlin are painfully aware that the latter's death in 1953 provoked a wave of workers' opposition throughout Eastern Europe.

The careful selection of Chernenko—an old man who himself cannot have a long period of office ahead—reflects their desire not to break the continuity. The appointment of a 'young' man, like Romanov (61) or Gorbachev (52) would have appeared too sudden and dramatic a change from the past, perhaps provoking demands for reform from within the Bureaucracy, and subsequently from the working-class.

The appointment of Konstatin Chernenko, therefore, represents no fundamental departure from the regime of Andropov, or Brezhnev, if it comes to that. In the longer run, however, he will have a rockier ride than these two as the economy fails to match the aspirations of the workers.

Final say

The Russian working class is the strongest in the world: highly cultured, concentrated in workplaces sometimes of over 100 000, and with the magnificent revolutionary traditions of 1905 and 1917. They may have been barred from the funeral of Yuri Andropov, but in the longer run they will have the final say.

They will not only be present, they will be the organisers of the funeral of the bureaucracy itself and when that day comes, the bureaucrats, dukes, millionaires and capitalists will stay away—because a Russian working class in power would spell the end for all the Stalinist bureaucracies, and the capitalist system in the West.

Sir Alfred Sherman, a 'fervent disciple and guru of Mrs. Thatcher' who thinks trade unions are a 'menace', has nominated Mr. Arkadiy Maslenikov, the London editor of *Pravda*, for membership of the top-notch capitalist Reform Club.

According to *The Observer* (15 January), the club committee is 'not overjoyed by the prospect' and is 'discreetly canvassing members not to sign the book in support of the Russian's membership.'

But Sir Alfred declares himself puzzled by the reaction. "He has every right to join; he is a member of the ruling class in Russia, and it would be part of his education. Anyway, a former Yugoslav ambassador was very proud to have been a member of Brook's."

British Columbia: workers take on a right-wing government

A WALL of silence has cut off South African workers from news of the many strike movements taking place around the world. Some, like the one described here in British Columbia, Canada, have gone to the lengths of a general strike. The press conspiracy of silence is deliberate.

The capitalist class, who own the press, do not want workers to be encouraged by news of how their brothers and sisters in other countries are struggling to uphold their living standards or defend their rights.

The strike is described here by a correspondent in Canada, who gives the background to the battle last year and also shows the way the workers organised among the community as a whole, forcing the right-wing Provincial government to back down.

The events of the second half of 1983 in British Columbia, the most westerly province of Canada, are of great importance to the labour movement internationally.

During this period organised labour came together, mobilised behind it many of the middle layers in society, took on the right wing Social Credit government of Bill Bennett, and forced it to retreat.

In a report on these events the British Columbia Federation of Labour explained how it saw the battle they had fought: "It marks the first time a labour movement has ef-

fectively stood up to the spread of the reactionary policies fostered by a Ronald Reagan, a Margaret Thatcher or a Bill Bennett. We must view our achievements in that light.

"Our effective opposition has undoubtedly caused many other governments, especially across Canada, to take a second look at bringing in similar legislation".

The right-wing Social Credit government came to power in the

province in the May elections of 1983. On 7 July it introduced its budget proposals and an unprecedented package of 26 bills.

The *Wall Street Journal* of 23 November 1983 summed up the objectives of this proposed legislation: It was to result in "reducing the Province's public service by 25% within the next year, civil servants' job security, stripping tenure from university professors, increasing government control over doctors' payments schedules, freezing all welfare payments, cutting housing allowances for welfare recipients, removing all rent controls, allowing landlords to evict tenants without cause and abolishing the province's liberal human rights commission".

The *Vancouver Sun* called the government's proposals "a radical social document unprecedented in a democratic state". With the full backing of big business the Bennett Government was, as one trade union leader explained, "trying to undo all the gains we have made in the last forty years".

A closer look at the government's proposals show how determined they were to break the labour movement. Bill two in the package would have legislated out of existence any negotiated agreement regarding hours of working and work schedule, shift working, overtime and vacation scheduling. All seniority substitution, pay and protection against contracting out was to be eliminated.

Bill three stated—"not withstanding the Labour Code and the Public Service Labour Relations Act, a public sector employer may terminate

By Rob O'Neill



The Solidarity Conference drew in thousands of workers and community groups, most of whom had never been involved in any protest activity before.

the employment of an employee without cause". Outright dictatorship for management was the aim in the public sector.

The overall objective of the government was to centralise all power in its own hands over wages, employment and working rules in the public sector and to bust the unions.

The government claimed that its objective was the reduction of the Province's budget deficit. Yet the July budget increased government spending by 12% and the deficit was a record Canadian \$1.6 bn. The cut-backs on wages and social spending were more than off-set by a 90% increase for the Ministry of Finance and an increase of over 20% for the Ministry of Industry, Trade and small business.

The Executive Committee of the BC Federation of Labour, in its report to its Annual convention in November 1983, summarised the government's intentions: "We should not lose sight of social credit goals. They are to produce an authoritarian society in which property rights are promoted to the detriment of social and democratic rights.

"They want a society in which the rich and powerful can use their wealth and positions to generate even more wealth and power for themselves. They want a return to the law of the jungle in which the strong devour the weak. The labour movement is one of the few obstacles in their path and we must ensure that that path remains blocked".

The statement correctly outlines the objectives, not only of the Social Credit government of British Colum-

bia, but also the objectives of Thatcher, Reagan, Kohl and other representatives of capitalism worldwide. The difference between them and Bennett is that he, inflated with his election victory, stated with absolute clarity all his aims at the one time and sought to bulldoze them through the Parliament by means of his majority.

But by doing so he provoked the labour movement and many of the middle layers of society into rage and a fierce opposition.

The main lesson for the labour movement internationally lies in how organised labour in BC responded to this challenge.

In BC 49% of the workforce are organised. However, only between 50% and 55% of the trade union movement affiliated to the British Columbia Federation of Labour. The first task was to unite all of organised labour.

In order to overcome constitutional difficulties facing a number of unions if they were to affiliate to the BC Federation and to move immediately to a united body, all unions agreed to the formation of "Operation Solidarity". This body named—as could be seen from the banners—after the Polish trade union organisation, united all the unions for the battle against the government. This was the body which led the struggle.

However, the trade union movement did not stop there. They then went on to set up the "Solidarity Coalition". This body had as its spine the trade unions, but it also brought onto its leading and local bodies, representatives of tenants'

associations, parents' associations, the human rights groups, women's rights groups, and all those sections of society under attack by the government.

Locally the Labour Councils—joint trade union bodies—organised the fightback by turning themselves into Committees of Action, with delegates being elected onto them from all the various local bodies such as tenant, parents associations etc.

In the Operation Solidarity Report to the BC Federation of Labour Convention in November 1983 it was stated: "The labour movement has long recognised that there is a 'natural majority' in the community, consisting of all those who work for wages and salaries, along with the retired and the disadvantaged". The setting up of Operation Solidarity and Solidarity Coalition turned this "natural majority" into a powerful fighting force under the leadership of organised labour.

Along with these measures every working member of all the unions paid into a Fighting Fund. \$45,000 was provided for a weekly paper called *Solidarity*. \$200,000 was spent on publicity. Under the leadership of Operation Solidarity and the Solidarity Coalition the fightback began.

Rallies

On 27 July over 20 000 people demonstrated at the Provincial Parliament. Rallies were held in the areas in the days following. 40 000 people attended a rally on 10 August.

On 20 August an eight-week programme of action was announced. This was to make the case for Solidarity's opposition to the Budget and the 26 bills by local activities such as rallies, meetings, workshops, petitions etc.

For example, 5 September saw the beginning of Human Rights Week, 12 September Workers Week, 19 September started Women's and Children's week, 26 September Tenants and Co-ops week. In this way, all the various sections of the "natural majority" had explained to them the real nature of the budget and the 26 bills, and how they themselves would be affected.

On 15 October up to 70 000 people took part in a demonstration



Part of one of the many demonstrations against the monetarist policies of right-wing Prime Minister Bill Bennett (right). The Solidarity movement included many campaign groups and involved the NDP and its youth section.

the Hotel Vancouver, where the Social Credit Party was holding its Provincial Assembly. All of these actions were preparations for the events of 1 November.

It was on this day the strike action began. At one minute to midnight, on 31 October, a deputy sheriff began the countdown, and at midnight as the British Columbia Government Employees Union moved into place with their pickets he announced—"We are now officially on strike".

Solid

The strike was solid up and down the province as the 35 000 workers took action. On 8 November the teachers joined the strike. As it was illegal for teachers to picket, other members of the Solidarity Coalition such as the parents and the community groups provided the pickets and the strike was solid. Teachers' pay cuts and sackings and cuts in education had united the parents and the teachers.

With 80 000 workers on strike and with plans to bring out transport workers and other sections in the following weeks, the province was well on the way to a general strike. Then this 'strong' government, with its parliamentary majority and the full backing of big business, was forced to come to the bargaining table and to listen to organised labour and its allies.

The lessons of these actions in Canada should be learned by the

labour movement internationally. Not matter how strong a government may be in terms of parliamentary seats, no matter how right-wing and determined it may be, it can be defeated.

The way to do this is to unite the labour movement, involve the minority groupings and the middle layers of society who are also under attack, explain the issues involved and then mobilise in a united struggle the full power of this "natural majority". There is no power in society which can prevail over such a force.

In those countries where monetarist, Thatcherite governments have not yet been stopped in their tracks it is because the labour leaders, instead of uniting the movement and mobilising it, have let one section after another go into the battle alone and refused to organise the movement as whole in the struggle.

In British Columbia the strike action was called off after 13 days and before the transport workers and other sections of the workforce who were set to come out in the days following could add their weight to the movement. In a private discussion between Bennett the Prime Minister and Jack Munro, regional president of the province's most powerful private sector union, the 50,000 strong International Woodworkers of America, a deal was struck.

The agreement included a withdrawal of Bill three which allowed sackings "without cause". Bill two, which would have legislated out of existence most union contracts and gains, was also destroyed when the government, as part of the agree-

ment, gave a new contract to the British Columbia Government Employees Union who had been first on the picket lines. This was a major victory for the unions.

However, on the other issues such as human rights, social services cuts and possible changes in the Labour Code all that was won were promises to set up consultative committees. The human rights groups, and parents' organisations were angry at an agreement being made by Munro, rather than by the Solidarity Coalition.

Most activists were also angry at the movement being called off when it was clear that support for continuing the action was overwhelming and that the government itself, not to mention the budget and the 26 bills, could have been utterly defeated.

Step forward

However, the strikes and mobilisations of the last five months of 1983 in British Columbia constituted a real step forward for the labour movement there, in the North American continent, and throughout the world.

"Operation Solidarity" as the report to the BC Federation of Labour 1983 Convention said, "represents a milestone in the history of the labour movement in Canada. Whatever the outcome of the current struggle, things will never be quite the same again".

This was very evident to anyone who attended the Convention, held



in Vancouver from 28 November to 2 December 1983. The convention hall was filled with delegates from the affiliated unions, delegates with only speaking rights from the non-affiliated unions and delegates from the various bodies such as the human rights committees, tenants, etc., who had speaking rights during the debate on the struggle of Solidarity Coalition.

Strengthened

The most obvious effect of the struggle was that the unity of the movement was strengthened. At every mention of unity and the need to overcome past divisions waves of applause rolled through the hall. The struggle put firmly on the agenda the need for unity of all unions in BC in one federation.

At every call for a renewed fight and "no talking to the government or business," applause and shouts filled the hall. The struggle had shown workers their power.

As one delegate stated, "what has been won has been won on the picket lines and demonstrations". A programme for action which was put to the convention by the executive committee and which contained no plans for action was decisively rejected. Calls for a regional general strike were heard.

Irrespective of the fact that outright victory was not gained in BC

the struggle has enormously strengthened the workers' movement. Big business and its government is now weaker and the working class stronger. This new balance of forces has come about because the movement took action and out of this action it has strengthened itself.

The mobilisation of organised labour and the various minority groups has also had effects on the political voice of labour in Canada—the New Democratic Party. Its leader, Dave Barrett, got a prolonged and enthusiastic standing ovation at the union convention.

The parliamentary part of the NDP had delayed the passage of the Bills in the Provincial legislature (parliament) and this gave more time for the Solidarity Coalition to get organised. The Executive Council of the BC Federation urged greater participation by union members in the NDP.

Another effect of the struggle was to strengthen the Left Caucus in the NDP in its struggle to take the party in a more openly socialist direction, and given the crisis facing Canadian society, it is only a socialist programme that offers a way out.

In British Columbia there was a 6% fall in the growth rate in 1982. With a population of 2.7 million in the Province there are 200 000 unemployed.

At the BC Federation convention a resolution was passed calling for the nationalisation of the banks. Another motion, calling for the taking over of the major corporations, was referred back to the executive. The two motions should be placed in a dominant position on the banners of the unions

In Canada as a whole there is 11% unemployment according to official figures. The Canadian Mental Health Association believes that real unemployment is over 19% and costs the country Can \$50 bn per year. The Canadian GNP fell 4.4% in 1982. And while it rose an estimated 3% in 1983 capacity utilisation remained at only 70%.

Canadian capital is fleeing the country or being employed in speculative ventures. Between 1974–81 the book value of Canadian investment in the US more than quadrupled to US \$27.4 bn and much of this went into real estate.

and the NDP.

One convention delegate put it bluntly, "the major corporations are the enemies of the people of British Columbia".

The workers in British Columbia have shown that they have the will and the power to fight. Given a strong leadership, and fighting on a clear socialist programme, a movement could be built which would stop the bosses and their governments in their tracks in all the provinces of Canada. This is what has to be done if working people are not to be driven back to the conditions of the 1930s.

With a NDP government in power in Canada, backed by the power of the "natural majority" and carrying out socialist policies, the first steps would be taken towards the transformation of Canadian society and the North American continent as a whole.

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For security reasons, fictitious names have been used by writers of articles in this issue of INQABA YA BASEBENZI. In every case, however, care has been taken not to give a misleading impression of the background and experience of the comrade concerned. Details about writers are provided only when security considerations make this possible.