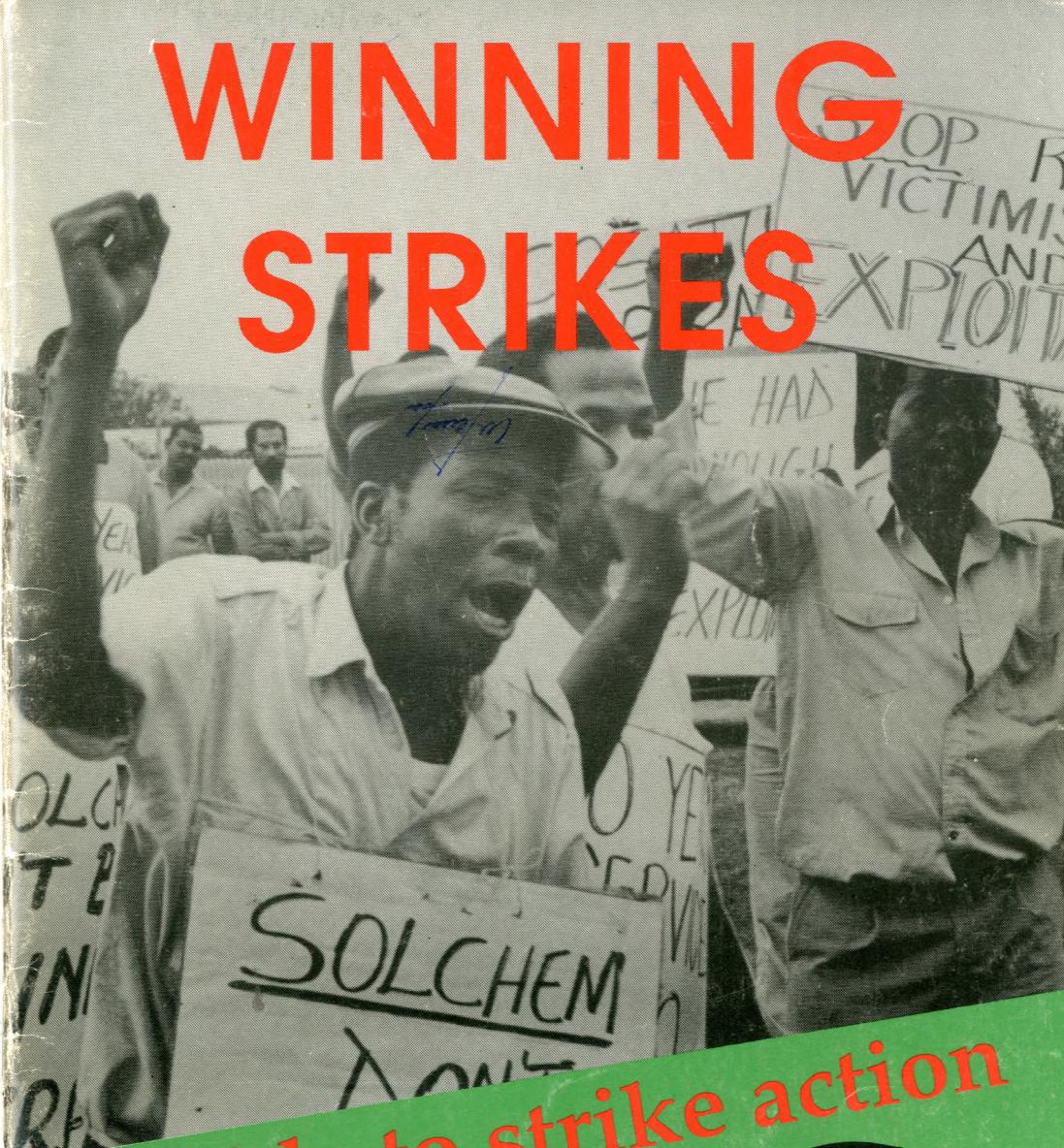
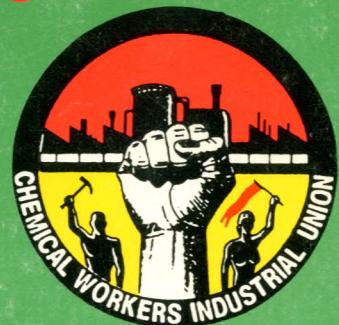


WINNING STRIKES



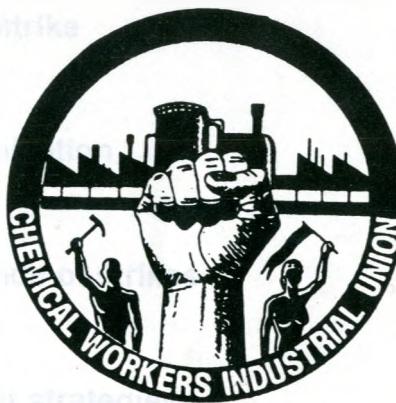
A guide to strike action



1A 15547 Star Strike book

WINNING STRIKES

A guide to strike action



Published in July 1992

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List of abbreviations

CAWU	Construction & Allied Workers Union
CB	Conciliation Board
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CWIU	Chemical Workers Industrial Union
FAWU	Food & Allied Workers Union
LRA	Labour Relations Act
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
POTWA	Post & Telecommunications Workers Association
PPWAWU	Printing, Paper, Wood & Allied Workers Union
SACCAWU	South African Commercial, Catering & Allied Workers Union
SACTWU	South African Clothing & Textile Workers Union
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers Union
SARHWU	South African Railway & Harbours Workers Union
T&GWU	Transport & General Workers Union
VAT	Value Added Tax

"Strikes...teach the workers to unite; they show them that they can struggle against the capitalists only when they are united; strikes teach the workers to think of the struggle of the whole working class against the whole class of factory owners and against the arbitrary, police government. This is the reason that socialists call strikes "a school of war", a school in which workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people, of all who labour, from the yoke of government officials and from the yoke of capital."

VI Lenin

Introduction

In recent years, CWIU has been amongst the top six unions involved in strike activity in South Africa. The militancy of our members dates back to the early seventies when it was often impossible to get union recognition without strike action.

Over and above plant strikes, the membership of CWIU have a rich history of participating in political mass actions such as the stayaway in the Transvaal in November 1984 against conditions in the schools and townships, and against the LRA Amendments in the late 1980's, and in 1990 and 1991 against VAT.

Today, when the bosses are talking about retrenchment, rationalisation, inflation, privatisation, deregulation and productivity, the strike remains one of the most powerful and favoured weapons of the organised labour movement.

But not all strikes have been successful. A number of heroic battles fought by workers were defeated. At times workers go on strikes without properly preparing. At other times the issue that they are fighting can be better resolved through other avenues of struggle.

This booklet is a manual for strike action. We hope that it will assist workers in taking effective and planned action to avoid some of the pitfalls of the past. The booklet outlines some of the key questions that workers should answer before going on strike. It also discusses the most important elements of strike organisation.

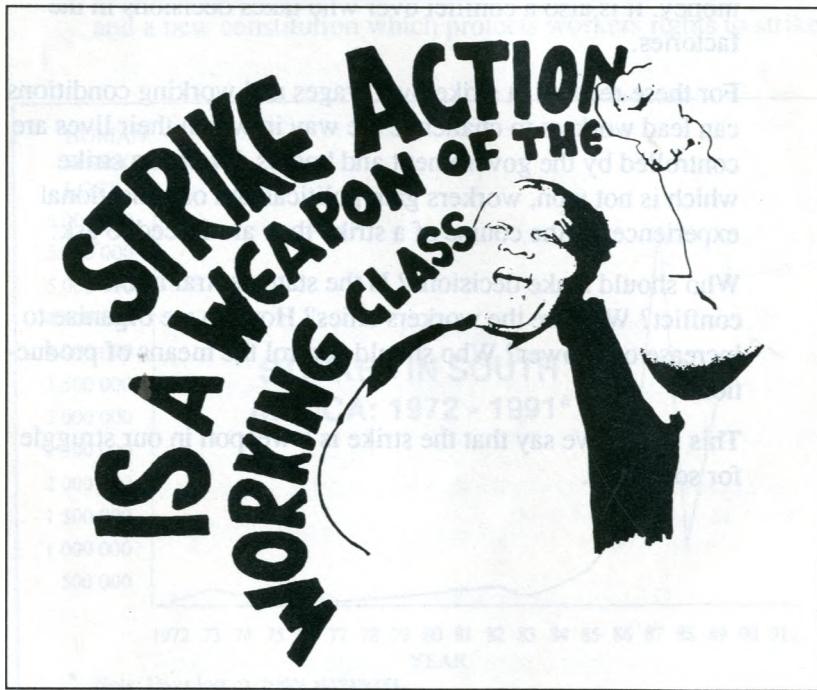
This is your booklet! Read, discuss & take action!

Chapter One

What is a Strike?

This chapter has two sections:

- The strike is a key weapon in our struggle for socialism
- Fight for the right to strike.



The strike is a weapon in our struggle for socialism

A strike is a collective action by workers when they refuse to work to force the employers or the state to listen to their demands. This is a simple definition. In reality, strikes are much more than this. They have their roots in the way in which our society is organised for profit.

Workers produce the wealth, but the bosses pay them the lowest possible wages to make the highest possible profits. When the bosses want to save money, the first thing they do is cut their labour costs.

Because the bosses own and control the factories, mines and farms they believe they can set their employees working conditions. So the conflict is deeper than a struggle over money. It is also a conflict over who takes decisions in the factories.

For these reasons, a strike over wages and working conditions can lead workers to challenge the way in which their lives are controlled by the government and bosses. Even in a strike which is not won, workers gain political and organisational experience. In the course of a strike they are forced to ask:

Who should make decisions? Is the state neutral in the conflict? Who are the workers allies? How do we organise to increase our power? Who should control the means of production?

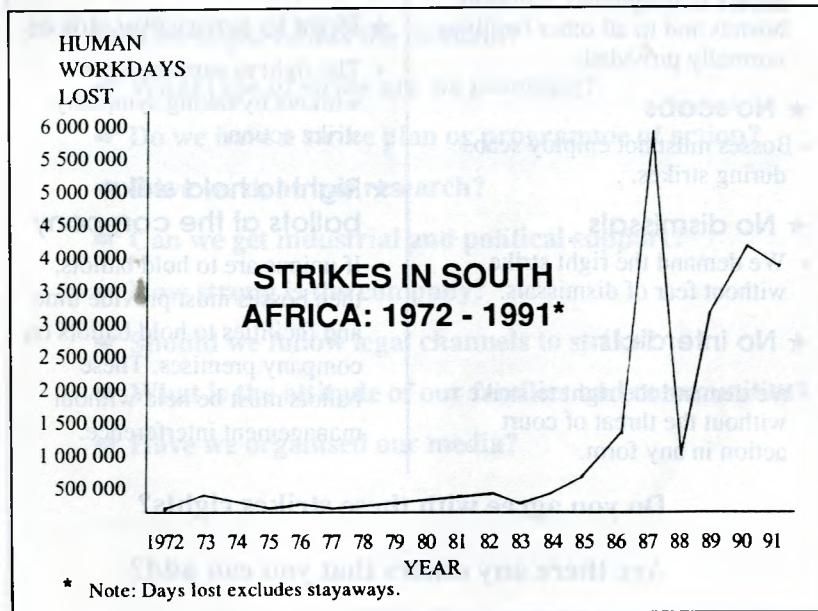
This is why we say that the strike is a weapon in our struggle for socialism.

Fight for the right to strike

In South Africa and around the world, in capitalist and so-called socialist countries, trade unions have relied on different kinds of industrial action to advance and defend their members rights.

One of the most important of these weapons has been the strike. In South Africa, workers have not won the full right to strike. Many laws and procedures make it difficult to strike. The police and army are quick to ruthlessly defend these laws. This is because strikes hurt the bosses and government.

So, strikes are not only about fighting against employers. In the struggle for socialism, we have to win the right to strike. This is a struggle against the government and for a new LRA and a new constitution which protects workers rights to strike.



DEMAND THE FULL RIGHT TO STRIKE

★ The right to picket

- The right to picket without having to obtain permission under any law.
- No unreasonable restrictions on the number of picketers.
- The right of picketers to be defended and to defend themselves against right wing attacks.
- The right to picket on company and public premises.
- The right of access to company premises and facilities
- During a strike, the right of access to telephones, canteens, hostels and to all other facilities normally provided.

★ No scabs

- Bosses must not employ scabs during strikes.

★ No dismissals

- We demand the right strike without fear of dismissals.

★ No interdicts

- We demand the right to strike without the threat of court action in any form.

★ Strike fund

- The right to set up strike funds with stop order facilities for contributions to strike funds.

★ No evictions

- Bosses must not be able to evict workers from company premises hostels or houses during a strike.

★ Right to call boycotts

- The right to call for boycotts during industrial action.

★ Right to sympathy strikes

- The right to support other workers by taking sympathy strike action.

★ Right to hold strike ballots at the company

- If unions are to hold ballots, then bosses must provide time and facilities to hold ballots on company premises. These ballots must be held without management interference.

Do you agree with these strike rights?

Are there any others that you can add?

Chapter Two

Planning a Strike

One of the biggest failures in strike action is the failure to prepare. Often when we are involved in negotiations, problems are dealt with step by step. We don't prepare for deadlock and strike action. By the time we realise that the next step is to strike, we have to rush our preparations. To win, we have to begin preparing for strike action the day our demands are formulated. Management will listen more carefully when they see that we are prepared to take action. This section outlines some of the key questions to answer when planning for a strike:

- Are workers prepared to take action?
- How important is the demand?
- What type of strike are we planning?
- Do we have a strike plan or programme of action?
- Have we done our research?
- Can we get industrial and political support?
- How strong is the company?
- Should we follow legal channels to strike?
- What is the attitude of our families and communities?
- Have we organised our media?

Are workers prepared to take action?

This is one of the first things to assess before deciding to strike. When preparing to strike, organise other actions, like go-slows or demonstrations to mobilise workers. These could be used at different stages of the negotiation process and be part of the plan developed when demands are first formulated.

IF NEGOTIATIONS DEADLOCK ASK....

- ★ Were plans made for action at different stages of the negotiations?
- ★ What is the mood of the workers?
- ★ Are they fed up with conditions and ready to take action?
- ★ Is further preparation needed?
- ★ Did members fully understand the demands?
- ★ Were workers clear that to win demands they must be prepared to take action and fight?

How important is the demand?

Under capitalism, the bosses are in a stronger position than workers. In any battle between workers and employers there is potential for victory or gains. There is also the possibility of defeat, losses, setbacks and demoralisation.

Before going on strike, the value of the issue must be carefully assessed. It may be disasterous to strike illegally when a company is retrenching if we do not have enough strength to squeeze the company elsewhere.

Some issues are obviously more important than others. The dismissal or victimisation of a shop steward is more important than a one week delay in the payment of bonuses.

What type of strike are we planning?

The preparation for a strike in a small plant is different to preparing for a strike in a national company or sector of an industry. From the beginning you must be clear of the size of the strike you are organising. This depends on the size and position of the company as well as the demands being made.

A strike in a large multinational company, with branches around the country, demands far more organisation than action in a single plant company.

In a large national strike, communication and co-ordination are the keywords. One factory cannot take action on its own. Joint action has to be carefully planned. The lack of strong centralised co-ordination in a national strike, can be disastrous. Workers will come out on strike, and begin making settlements at plant level at different times. This can lead to demoralisation and defeat.

Do we have a strike plan or programme of action?

If we are thinking of striking, we must have a clear programme of action. We must carefully plan our strategies and the different aspects of the strike. In this way all workers are clear of the strategy from the beginning. It is also easier to get support from other organisations if there is a clear programme to which they can fit in and contribute.

HAVE YOU ORGANISED?

- ★ A regular meeting place.
- ★ Transport.
- ★ Co-ordination if a national strike.
- ★ Money for travel to co-ordinating meetings.
- ★ Money for media and pamphlets.

Have we done our research?

The strike/shop stewards committee together with union officials should do research to find out as much about the company as possible. Union officials should assist and train the members of the strike committee to research the company and its links with other companies:

- There should be a list of factories/shops which are economically related as part of the same holding company/conglomerate.
- There should be a list of companies which trade with the company.
- Sensitive information regarding the company - profits, wages, environmental record, safety standards, corrupt deals, misleading adverts etc. must also be researched.

DO YOU KNOW....

- ★ How strong is the company?
- ★ What links does the company have?
- ★ What other companies trade with the company?
- ★ What sensitive information can be used?

Can we get industrial and political support?

Before going on strike or taking action, we must have an idea of how much material, and political support we can organise. We must make contact and call meetings with our allies.

- Make contact with various union structures.
- If it is a large company, organise meetings with workers at other plants.
- Formally (in writing) inform unions which organise companies with links to your company about the intended action.
- Call joint meetings, both mass and shop stewards council meetings with related factories/shops.
- Build unity with COSATU/NACTU by informing and requesting support from related affiliates.
- Inform civics/youth/religious/political organisations in writing. Invite them to meetings to discuss a proposed programme of action.
- If it is a multinational company adopt a similar approach with its overseas plants. In the chemical industry contact unions through the International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers Unions (ICEF).

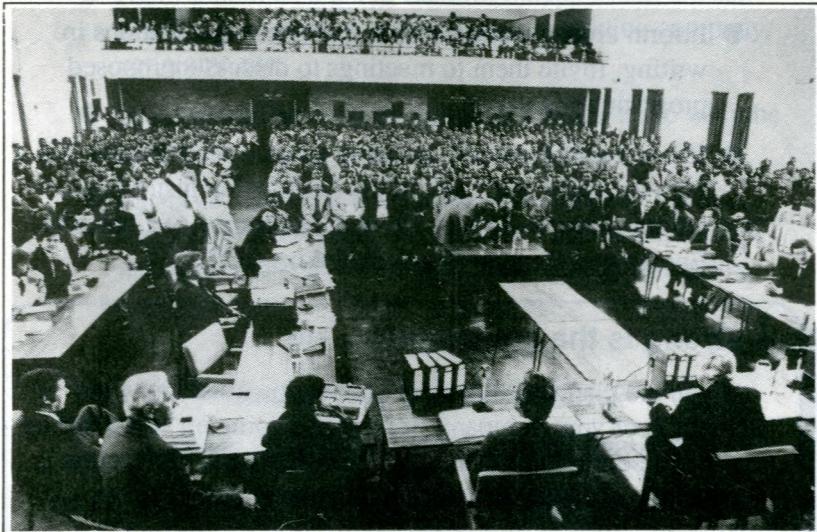
How strong is the company?

If you are planning industrial action, you must know the strength of your company. It is no use going on strike during a quiet period in production. The best time to take action is when the company has to complete many orders.

Understanding the financial strength of the company, allows you to make a better decision over the length of a strike.

DO YOU KNOW....

- ★ How much stock does the company have?
- ★ What are the customer demands?
- ★ Does it have serious competitors in the market?
- ★ Could it possibly shift/transfer production?
- ★ Could it continue production despite the action?
- ★ What is the economic standing of the factory/company?
- ★ When (which time of day/week/month/year) is production most vital to the company?
- ★ Could it easily replace workers?



The Industrial Court in action at Edendale Ecumenical Centre in Pietermaritzburg during the hearing of the great Sarmcol strike. Taking legal strike action may give workers more protection in the Industrial Court.

Should we follow legal channels to strike?

In South Africa we still have not won the full right to strike. To strike, we are supposed to follow a number of procedures which are set down in the Labour Relations Act. These procedures take some time before workers can actually go on strike.

When workers want to take action, they often don't want to go through all these procedures. The choice of whether to strike without using the procedures, depends on the strength of the workers and the nature of the issue. There are a number of advantages and disadvantages with both legal and illegal strikes.

LEGAL STRIKE

Advantages:

- ★ Greater legal protection from dismissal.
- ★ Could make workers more confident.
- ★ Useful for a first round of industrial action.
- ★ Allows proper planning to build up pressure on management.

Disadvantages:

- ★ It could be long and drawn out and weaken workers militancy.
- ★ Management is alerted and can also prepare.

ILLEGAL STRIKE

Advantages:

- ★ Could provide a quick and immediate response to an issue.

Disadvantages:

- ★ Workers are more vulnerable to dismissal.
- ★ Management could use it to intimidate workers.

PROCEDURES FOR LEGAL STRIKE ACTION

(including 1991 amendments)

- 1** Once negotiations can proceed no further, declare a dispute in writing with the other party.
- 2** Apply for the establishment of a Conciliation Board (CB). If it is an unfair labour practice this must be done within 180 days of declaring the dispute.
- 3** Send a copy of the application to the employer and retain proof of delivery to the employer. A copy of this proof must accompany your application (which must be made in duplicate) to the Department of Manpower.
- 4** A Certificate of Compliance signed by the office bearers of the union must accompany the application for the CB.
- 5** The CB ought to sit within 30 days of the application. If it does not sit, or no agreement can be reached, a strike ballot can be taken.
- 6** If the ballot is in favour of strike action, workers can embark on a legal strike.

What is the attitude of our families and communities?

It is important to involve strikers' families and the communities where they live in strike activity. You cannot just spring a strike on those who are normally closest to you. During strikes, strikers depend heavily on their families, religious groups and communities for material and emotional support. Strikers who were the main breadwinner now have to rely on others who might not support the strike. If they do not fully understand the situation, they could pressurise the striker to return to work.

Advanced planning is vital. The striker's family should understand the reasons for a proposed strike. Their support, or lack of support must be seriously considered in any decision to go on strike. They could also be incorporated into the strike programme of action. Individuals could also be co-opted onto the strike/support committee.

Have we organised our media?

Regular pamphlets will need to be produced and distributed during the strike. Reliable printing facilities should be prepared and money set aside for bulk production of information pamphlets.



Chapter Three

Strike Organisation

Often during strikes workers sit around doing nothing. They may play cards or sit in small groups and talk. This does not build solidarity and commitment. In fact, a strike should be the most active time in a workers life. There is no time to sit around and talk if we want to organise to win. This section looks at some of the many tasks to be organised before and during a strike.

- ☛ **Running a strike ballot**
- ☛ **Elect a strike committee**
- ☛ **Picket the company premises everyday**
- ☛ **Make sure that blacking is effective**
- ☛ **Organise a consumer boycott**
- ☛ **Raise funds for the strike**
- ☛ **Make sure that money is properly administered**
- ☛ **Keep the strike in the publics eyes**
- ☛ **Produce your own media**
- ☛ **Gather strategic information**
- ☛ **Educate yourselves**
- ☛ **Keep in contact with the union office**
- ☛ **Ensure that the strike is disciplined**
- ☛ **Make sure that you can defend yourselves**

Running a strike ballot

A strike ballot is an important way of finding out whether workers want to strike. CWIU's constitution says that the union will not declare a strike unless the majority of affected members have approved the strike in a ballot. The constitution sets down guidelines for running a ballot at the national, branch, factory and departmental levels of the union:

- The shop stewards committee must take the overall responsibility for running the ballot at the factory level.
- Each member must be notified of the ballot 24 hours before it is taken. The ballot will not be invalidated if a member does not receive notice.
- The shop stewards committee must appoint at least two union members as scrutineers who will oversee the ballot and count the ballot papers. One of the scrutineers is usually a union official.
- The ballot can be held in any convenient place.
- Each member entitled to vote will be issued with a ballot paper in the presence of a scrutineer. The completed form must be put in a sealed container provided for the ballot papers.
- The ballot papers must not be marked in any way other than what is needed to vote otherwise they will be spoilt.
- After the vote, the ballot boxes must be sealed in the presence of the scrutineers. They must count the votes and inform the membership of the results as soon as possible.
- Ballot papers and spoilt papers must be placed in a sealed box and given to the Branch Secretary who must keep the papers for not less than 3 years.

- At least 30% of the eligible membership must vote for the results of the ballot to be valid.
- The shops stewards committee will be bound to act in accordance with the decision of the majority of the members.

MANAGEMENT WILL....

- ★ try and watch the strike ballot.
- ★ deny balloting facilities unless they can watch.
- ★ try and make the union agree to rules for the strike ballot.
- ★ want copies of the ballot papers.
- ★ try and interdict the strike on the grounds that the ballot was not properly run.

Remember, a strike ballot is a union issue set down in our constitution. It has nothing to do with the management.

STRIKE BALLOT

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union has been in dispute with Genref Ltd since 26/02/1992. The dispute involves the company's refusal to accede to the union's demands around improvements to wages and working conditions. A Conciliation Board appointed by the Department of Manpower has failed to resolve the dispute.

Do you wish to take industrial action in support of the union's demands?



YES	
NO	



A strike ballot form.

Elect a strike committee

At the centre of the strike is the strike or shop stewards committee. The strike committee should be elected well before the actual strike begins, or at the latest on the day that the decision to strike is made. The elected shop stewards should form the core of the strike committee. Workers with leadership potential or special skills should be encouraged to serve on the strike committee. The strike committee must provide the leadership of the strike.

THE STRIKE COMMITTEE SHOULD....

- ★ Co-ordinate the strike.
- ★ Hold regular strike committee meetings and report to and receive mandates from members on a regular basis.
- ★ Delegate tasks to strikers and ensure maximum involvement of strikers.
- ★ Ensure that sub-committees (eg. fundraising, media, discipline, defence etc.) are formed around important tasks.
- ★ Hear reports from subcommittees and take tactical decisions with the support of strikers.
- ★ Set aside time to read about other strikes and educate themselves.



COSATU IN A BOTTLE

Mined ore for the bottle top
NUM

Guarding the factory
T&GWU

Cleaning the factory
T&GWU

Workers overalls
SACTWU

Paper label
PPWAWU

Transport
SARHWU

Bottle Top
NUMSA

Sand for the glass
CAWU

Glass bottle
CWIU

Water in beer
SAMWU

Brewing the beer
FAWU

Selling the beer
SACCAWU



Telephone calls
POTWA

As with a bottle of beer, many COSATU affiliates are involved in producing a single product. This makes it easier to organise blocking action.

Picket the company premises everyday

The main aim of picketing is to prevent scabs from taking striking workers jobs, and to persuade non-strikers to join the strike. It can also raise publicity, and keep the strike in the public's eyes.

Most companies are opposed to picketing and will do all in their power to prevent it. They will often try and interdict picketing workers.

The picket needs to be carefully planned. All strikers should participate in the picket on a roster basis. Teams of picketers armed with clear and simple slogans on picket-posters should block every gate and possible entrance to the workplace.

Picketing is a useful way to involve other organisations and workers in the strike. It may be necessary to picket around the clock. In such cases, other organisations can provide people to assist.

Make sure that blacking is effective

An effective blacking system can be a powerful weapon in a strike. Blacking is where workers from a company refuse to deliver supplies, or accept goods from companies where workers are on strike. This has to be organised with workers who supply or are the customers of the affected company. It means working with COSATU and NACTU affiliates and sometimes even with unorganised workers.

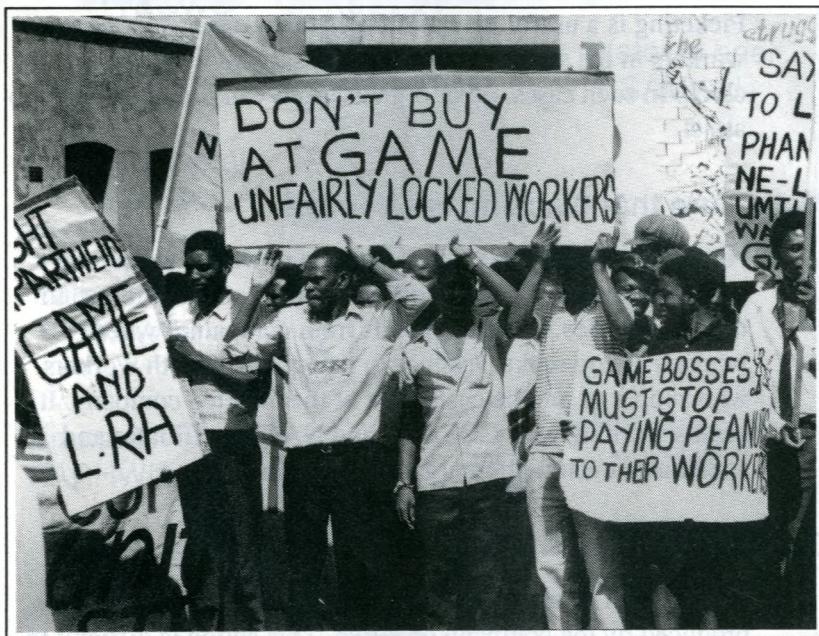
Organise a consumer boycott

Appeals can be made to the community not to buy the goods produced by the company on strike. This action is difficult to organise and co-ordinate. The boycott does not necessarily have to be organised under the tight discipline of the strike

committee and the members. It is normally carried out around very popular and visible products.

The advantage of the consumer boycott is that it draws in other sections of the working class and could help build mass action against capital and the state around a working class issue.

The decision of whether to launch a consumer boycott must be carefully assessed. It depends on the type of product is being made. The attitude of the community also needs to be continually assessed. A failed consumer boycott can be very demoralising for strikers.



Strikers from Game Stores in Durban use the march against the LRA in 1989, to protest against being locked out and to call for a consumer boycott against Game.

Raise funds for the strike

Money is central to sustaining the strike. Lack of funds can often lead to a strike collapsing. Funds are needed to assist individual strikers and to keep the strike running on a day to day basis. There are a number of ways strikers can organise funding which involve other members, their families and community.

Strike funds:

If the union has a strike fund, regular payouts to strikers may be made in terms of the rules of such a strike fund. If workers were prepared for the strike they could also collect money before striking and start their own plant based strike fund.

Donors:

Sympathetic donors overseas and in South Africa might offer some assistance for specific activities. There should be clear motivations for such donations. Instead of money, some donors could be requested to give food in a long strike.

Fundraising committee:

A fundraising committee should be elected to co-ordinate fundraising activities.

- Raffles
- Dances
- Stoporders from other members
- Selling T-shirts, posters and media.

Make sure that money is properly administered

The strike committee must make sure that funds are administered correctly and honestly. Funds can provide only a small

amount of money to each striker. Normally a register is kept with each striker signing for the amount received. A treasurer should be elected by strikers and account through regular reports. The strike committee should contact the union office as it usually administers money.

Keep the strike in the publics eyes

It is important to try and keep the strike in the news. Strikers must use imaginative ways to keep the press interested. There are a number of ways to publicise the strike and involve the members:

Marches & mass action:

Regular marches should be organised in the industrial area where the strike is taking place and in areas where blacking action is organised. These could be at lunch breaks to involve other workers. Strikers should participate in other marches organised by political or civic organisations. They should go to these marches, to distribute pamphlets and raise their banners publicising the strike.

Office occupations:

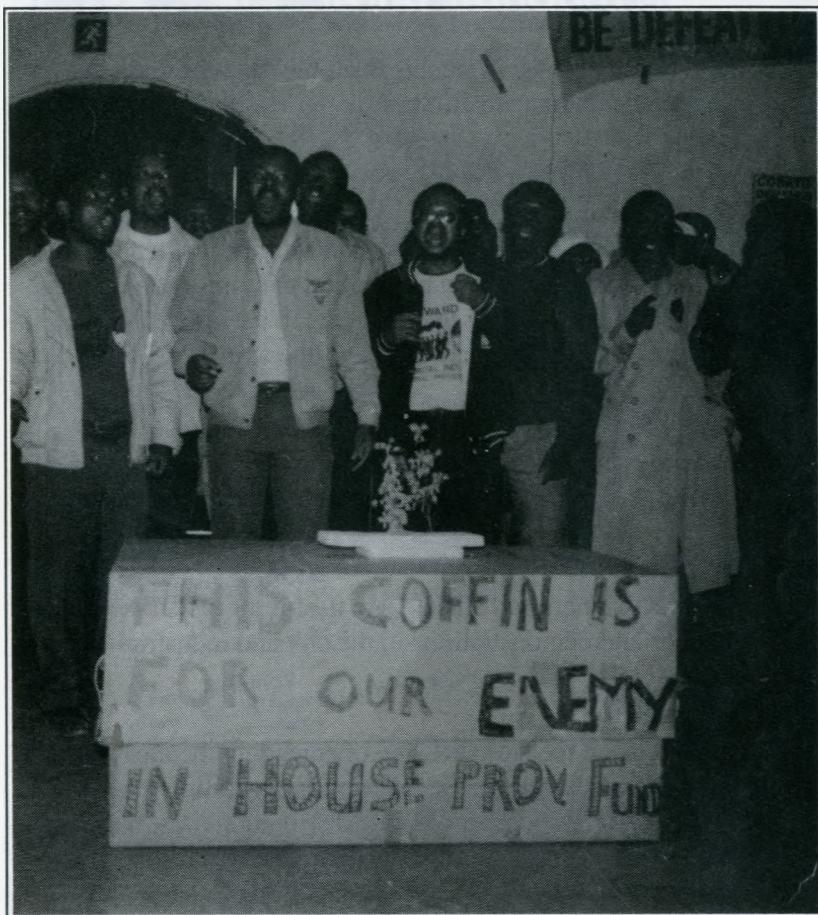
A useful way to get publicity is to occupy the Head offices of a particular company. Strikers should try and occupy the offices for as long as possible. Where a multinational is involved, the offices of an embassy or consulate could be occupied.

Culture:

Culture can be used to publicise a strike. If someone can write poetry they should attend other meetings and recite poems about the strike. Others could workshop a short play, outlining the reasons for and progress around the strike.

Videos:

If the strike lasts for a long period, strikers can organise a video to be made outlining the problems they face, and the history of the strike.



Workers sing their own song about the CINPF to publicise their struggle during the Ciba Geigy strike on the Witwatersrand during 1990.

Produce your own media

Ideally strikers should elect a special media committee. They should liaise with the strike committee and the union office to organise media for the strike.

Write press statements:

Send regular press statements to all newspapers updating them on developments in the strike.

Keep the press informed:

When an action is planned the press must be informed and invited to attend. It is useful to plan activities which attract attention and publicity. In big strikes, call press conferences only at certain stages of the strike eg. to announce a programme of action or a new phase of the struggle.

Photographs:

Someone should take photographs of all activities and send them to the union, alternative, or commercial newspapers.

Placards/banners/stickers:

Placards, banners and stickers are useful for picketing and for marches and demonstrations in the city and industrial areas.

Pamphlets:

Pamphlets are the simplest way of spreading the message of the strike and explaining its reasons and agitating for support. To be effective, a proper plan for distribution must be developed before deciding how many pamphlets should be produced.

ALL PETROLEUM WORKERS

Unite & fight to defend your living standards!



Petroleum bosses refuse to meet jointly with CWIU

All the major petroleum employers called by CWIU on 12 July in Durban have refused to attend a meeting to discuss centralised bargaining in the Petroleum industry.

The bosses refused and gave the following reasons:

- How can we discuss centralised bargaining in the whole petroleum industry?
- Why are the petroleum bosses unwilling to negotiate?
- Why are the petroleum bosses unwilling to meet?

Deregulation

The bosses say that they are not willing to negotiate because they are busy deregulating the industry. They are also unwilling to negotiate because they are busy deregulating the industry.

This is only the beginning of their rush for more deregulation. The government is prioritising markets in Africa.

What does the company want?

- Retrenchments
- More work

JOIN THE MARCH AGAINST DISMISSESSALS

The Southern Natal Branch of CWIU calls on its members and allies to join the march to Reckitt & Colman in Mobern.

Why are we marching?

In June last year, 350 CWIU members at Reckitt & Colman in the Transvaal were unfairly dismissed.

The workers went on strike to demand that the company participate in the National Provident Fund (CNPFF). This was after workers had tried to negotiate with the company.

We demand:

- Reinstatement of workers
- R&C must contribute to the National Provident Fund



Stop attacks on the working class!

No to unfair dismissals!

No to retrenchments!

Fight for the Right to Strike!

An injury to one is an injury to all!

A working class united will never be defeated!



0 March.

Time: 11 am.
Place: Sinclair Triangle.

SA DRUGGISTS REFUSE CENTRALISED BARGAINING

Prepare to Ballot!

In 1991, CWIU demanded one national bargaining forum for the 600 SA Druggists across the country. The company refused.

The company refused to negotiate.

and refusing to negotiate.

any has
Cape
and
against



Pamphlets play a key role in keeping members informed and in mobilising support for a strike. Here, SARHWU organisers hand out pamphlets after a strike report back meeting.

3 KEY MEDIA TASKS....

- ★ Produce placards and pamphlets regularly in order to inform people and win support.
- ★ Liaise with the press and ensure that the strike is covered in the newspapers.
- ★ Train striking workers in media production.

Gather strategic information

During the strike you must have as much information about the employers as possible. Even if there is no one in the company who can provide you with information you can:

- Monitor the strength of the bosses to maintain good production levels.
- Know the company plans to maintain production eg. scabs, shifting production to other factories, night work etc.
- Know when and how the company intends resorting to brutal tactics eg. calling in police and/or vigilantes.
- Know the company's connections and history, both locally and overseas.
- Know the customers and suppliers of the company to target groups of workers to support the strike through blacking action.

Educate yourselves

Workers learn best about their political role when involved in actual struggles. This is especially so during the strike. In the strike, workers have to relate practically to their enemies and allies. During the strike there is also time for learning formally in meetings and seminars. The strike experience and the "formal" learning should complement each other.

Union organisers can assist the strike committee with educational programmes by organising:

- videos & posters
- guest speakers from COSATU and other organisations
- reading material
- poetry, plays and other culture.

Keep in contact with the union office

The union office is the centre of where union activities are co-ordinated. The strike committee should use the office to communicate with the rest of the union and other sympathetic organisations. The office can be used for meetings. Letters, press releases, pamphlets can easily be sent from the union office. Union officials should assist the strike committee.

Ensure that the strike is disciplined

Discipline is important in any strike. A disciplinary committee should be elected at the very first strike meeting. The disciplinary committee must report to and receive mandates from the strikers general meeting. The committee must identify disciplinary problems and try and resolve them. Disciplinary measures amongst strikers should try and correct undisciplined actions as opposed to simply punishing wrong-doers. Common disciplinary problems during a strike include:

- Latecoming/missing meetings
- Not carrying out mandated duties
- Drunkeness
- Fighting amongst strikers
- Individualism
- Strike breaking

Make sure that you can defend yourselves

In many strikes the bosses use scabs, police and vigilantes to assault, arrest and even kill workers to try and break the strike. This is done by governments and capitalists around the world. The strike committee must make sure that adequate preparations are made to defend themselves and the strikers.

SILENT STRIKE BREAKERS....

- ★ Lack of solidarity support.
- ★ No strike funds.
- ★ Weak organisation.
- ★ Routinism of union leadership in responding to strikes.
- ★ Legalism - the tendency to completely rely on lawyers to resolve a dispute or strike.



It is important to keep a strike in the public's eyes. Here Shell workers protest outside the Shell Head Offices in Durban during the 8-day national strike in 1990.

Chapter Four

Different kinds of Strikes

All strikes are similar as they involve a refusal to work. But, they are organised at many different levels. Some strikes take place at the plant level, while others are organised across a number of plants.

When planning a strike, workers should combine different methods to surprise and pressurise the bosses. To build workers confidence, it might be better to organise a go slow before striking.

This chapter looks at some of the different kinds of strikes used by workers.

- ☛ Work to rule
- ☛ Go slow
- ☛ Work stoppage/demonstration strike
- ☛ Plant/company based
- ☛ Wildcat strikes
- ☛ Grasshopper strikes
- ☛ Solidarity strikes
- ☛ Sit-in/sleep-in & factory occupations
- ☛ Industrywide strike
- ☛ Political stayaway
- ☛ General strike
- ☛ Mass strike

Work to rule

This is not really a strike but a form of industrial action used to pressure management and mobilise workers in the run up to a strike. Here workers refuse to do any work which is not directly covered by their grade or job description.

Go slow

This is also a mobilising tool and a way to pressure management. Workers slow down production by working at a far slower rate than normal.

Work stoppage/demonstration strike

Here workers stop work only for a short period to highlight their demands to management. This could be accompanied by a demonstration with placards in the factory. A work stoppage can also be used in the run up to a larger or longer strike.

Plant based strike

This strike is confined to workers at a particular factory or plant. Unless solidarity action is organised it can be a weak form of strike. In small companies where there is only one plant it is unavoidable. To strengthen the strike, other forms of action should be carefully planned. In larger companies with a number of plants, plant based strikes can be used to surprise management and protest against unfair practices at the factory.

Company based strikes

In larger companies with plants across the country, workers may organise a national company strike. Such a strike could be around a common national demand, or a solidarity strike with workers in one plant who are facing difficulties or being

victimised. This takes careful planning and co-ordination, but can be very effective in forcing the company to listen to workers demands.

Wildcat strikes

These strikes are “unprocedural” and often “illegal”. They are a quick response by workers to an issue which is upsetting them. The surprise element of the strike can shock management into listening to workers demands.

Grasshopper strike

This is when workers strike repeatedly over a period of time for short periods. In this way they are able to disrupt production to try and force management to listen to their demands.

Solidarity strikes

This is when workers, who are not directly affected by an issue, take strike action in support of other workers on strike.

Sit-in/sleep-in & factory occupation

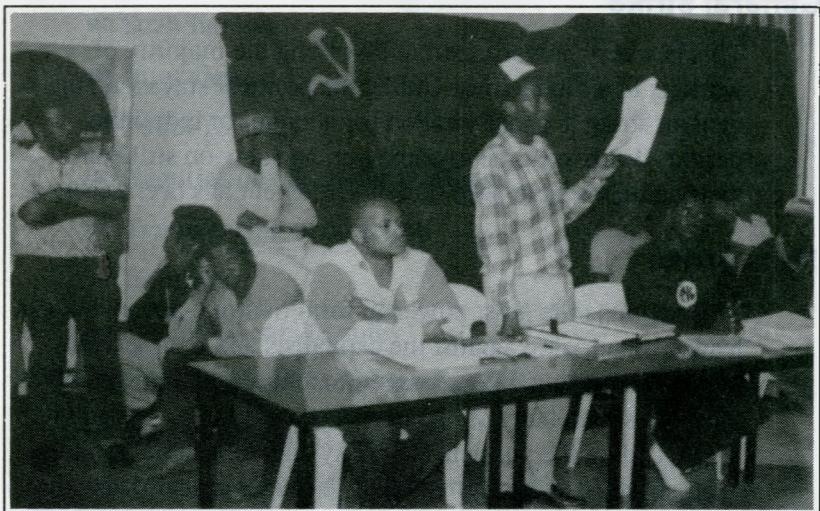
The sit-in, sleep-in or factory occupation is a very powerful form of strike. By occupying the factory, workers are in a far stronger position than being out of the company premises. Sometimes it is useful to occupy a canteen. Remember that to stay inside the factory for long periods, blankets and food have to be organised.

Industrywide strike

An industrywide strike takes place within a industry or sector of an industry eg., during annual wage negotiations with the employer body, SEIFSA, NUMSA have often threatened strike action in the metal industry. In CWIU, we may have to



Factory demonstrations can be an effective way of preparing workers for strike action. Here CWIU members demonstrate at Formex Industries in Port Elizabeth during 1991.



Factory occupations and sleep-ins are a powerful form of strike action. Workers at Johnson & Johnson in East London occupy the canteen during a strike in 1990.

organise strikes in the different sectors of the chemical industry to win our demand for centralised bargaining. In an industrywide strike, the structures of the union, which are organised along industrial lines, play a key role.

Political stayaway

This strike action involves hundreds of thousands or even millions of workers across industries as well as other sections of the oppressed community. It may be called by political organisations and community groups in consultation with trade unions. The political stayaway is called for short periods to pressure the government and bosses to agree to a set of demands. Although the political stayaway has been used often in South Africa, it has limitations. Often the government and the bosses just sit through the action without giving into the demands. They can afford to lose one or two days production.

General strike

This is a very powerful strike involving the majority of workers in all industries. Unlike the political stayaway, the general strike is usually called for a longer or indefinite period. Workers agree to come out, and stay on strike until their demands have been met or settlement has been reached.

Mass strike

This action is the most powerful form of strike action and can lead to an uprising against the capitalists and their government. The reasons for a mass strike may vary. But it involves far more spontaneity on the part of the working class and its allies. Unlike the political stayaway and the general strike, a mass strike is seldomly "called". The mass strike breaks out within the working class which is forced to unite, organise itself and struggle to bring about a new order.

Chapter Five

Management Strategies

Any strike is a test of strength between the employers and workers. As soon as, and usually before, workers go on strike, the bosses move into action. Their response is varied, but at all times they try to break the strike. The trade union movement has over the years experienced many of management's strategies. This chapter discusses some of the more common strategies:

- ☛ Mass dismissals
- ☛ Lockouts
- ☛ Selective firing & rehiring
- ☛ Scab labour
- ☛ Interdicts
- ☛ Police & army
- ☛ Negotiations & divisive offers
- ☛ Transferring production
- ☛ Impimpis
- ☛ Setting up strike rules
- ☛ Intimidation of workers families
- ☛ Victimising shop stewards
- ☛ Retrenchments & factory closure

+ *Agree to negotiate*
+ *Withdrawing facilities*
+ *Stockpiling*
+ *Family interrogations* - *Letter to families*
+ *Transferring production*

Mass dismissals

At times the bosses dismiss their entire workforce when they strike. Sometimes they selectively re-employ those workers who accept their conditions. These mass dismissals are used to smash the union.

Recently, it is more difficult to fire all striking workers because the courts offer some protection to workers who have followed the legal route to strike action. If the courts are satisfied that the strike is legal, they have granted reinstatement orders in favour of the dismissed workers.

In strikes which are un-procedural/unlawful (wildcat strikes), the courts have decided against the workers and in favour of the bosses. This has allowed the company to dismiss workers en-mass. During unprocedural strikes, the bosses often use ultimatums and the threat of dismissals to instill fear in workers. When management issue such ultimatums to workers, we must take them seriously.

In weaker, and even in larger and stronger factories, where workers take strike action “illegally”, the threat of losing your job is a real one.

Lockouts

Just as workers go on strike to try and win their demands, so the bosses lock workers out to try and get them to accept their offers. Management also have to follow the procedures set down in the law before they can legally lockout workers. If they do not follow these procedures, their lockout can be ruled unlawful by the courts.

Recently the bosses have embarked on locking out workers either just before they go on strike, or during their strike. Such lockouts are often followed by ultimatums for workers

to return to work on the old conditions or on the basis of management's final offer.

Selective firing and rehiring

One of the bosses most dangerous weapons is selective firing and rehiring during a strike. They do this to create disunity among workers and to get rid of the militant leadership within the plant. It is a very difficult issue to deal with and needs to be discussed before going on strike.

Scab labour

During a strike management will try by all means to keep production going. They do this by employing scab labour. The company often tries to increase racial tensions by employing scabs of different races than the workforce. Scab labour in strikes has often resulted in violence.

MANAGEMENT DEFENDS SCABS BY....

- ★ Using company vehicles to transport scabs from their homes to work.
- ★ Employing additional security guards.
- ★ Relying on the police and army to give protection to scabs.
- ★ Using armed guards on delivery vehicles.
- ★ Employing scabs on a racial or political basis, to increase divisions in the working class.

Interdicts

An interdict is when the court restricts one party from doing something to another. Since the 1991 changes to the LRA, management cannot interdict legal or procedural strikes. The court can't rule that workers must stop a legal strike.

Management can call for an interdict against wildcat strikes. To do this they must give workers 48 hours notice of their application for the interdict. This means that workers can go on a wildcat strike for 48 hours before the courts grant management an interdict to force workers to return to work.

The LRA also says that if the union provides the boss with 10 days notice of strike action, the employers have to provide the union with 5 days notice before seeking an application for an interdict in the courts.

The 1991 changes to the LRA have assisted workers, but they are still untested. The interdict is a powerful weapon and the bosses are looking for new ways to interdict striking workers. They can still interdict "illegal" strikes.

THE BOSSES TRY TO INTERDICT STRIKES BY....

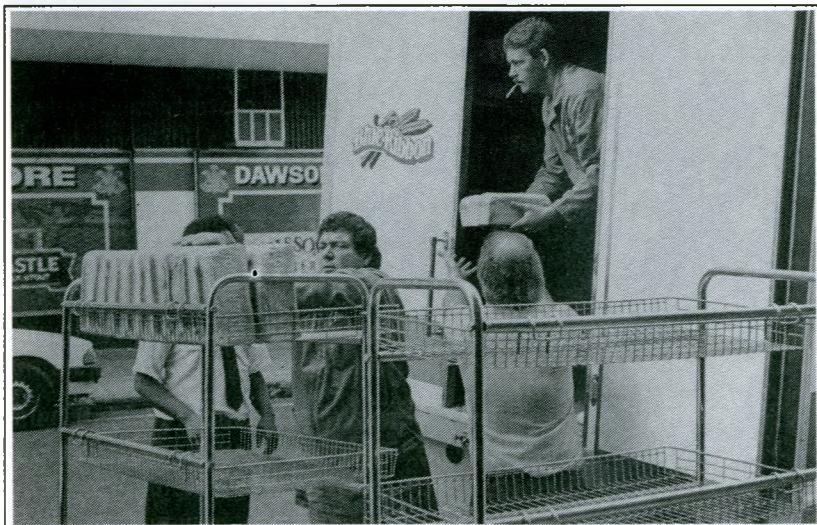
- ★ making up stories that the strike is not legal.
- ★ saying that the strike is illegal because of the way that the ballot was conducted.
- ★ getting interdicts and removing strikers from company property on the grounds of intimidation.
They sometimes call singing and toying with "intimidation".
- ★ using a clause in the LRA which allows for an interdict to be granted in an emergency if proper notice (ie. instead of waiting 48 hours) of time and hearing is given to the union.



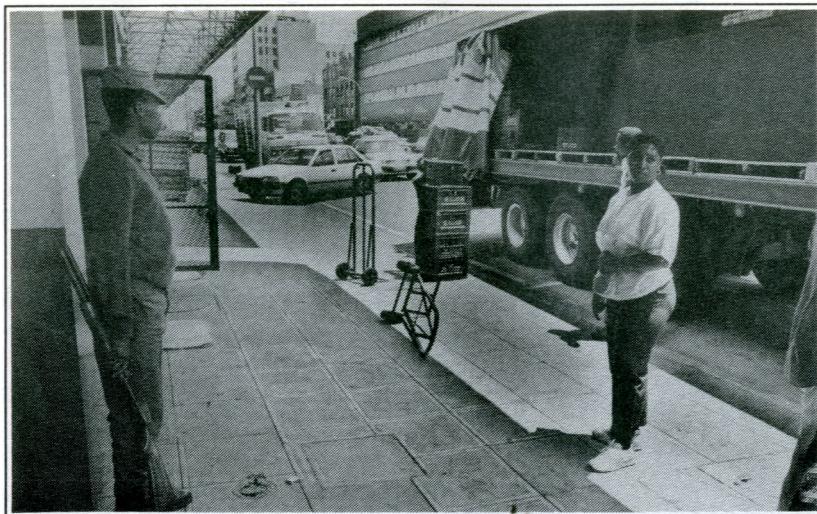
The police and army are brought in to evict workers from company premises at SASOL. This mass dismissal was in response to a stayaway on 5/6 November 1984. CWIU was able to negotiate reinstatement for most of the dismissed workers.



Lockout at Megoplastics in Pinetown during 1991.



Management uses scabs of different races to try and increase divisions between workers. Here white workers unload bread during the national 3-day stayaway in June 1988, called to protest against the LRA.



Armed security guards protect scabs during the strike against South African Breweries organised by FAWU in 1987.

Police & army

Most employers are quick to call in the police or army or even private security guards to intimidate striking workers. The law says that employers have a right to call in the police and army if there is any threat of violence or damage to capitalist property. The bosses also call in the police to disperse workers who are picketing outside of company gates.

Negotiations & divisive offers

Management often uses the negotiations during the strike to make offers that will divide workers. Fully aware of the state of the strike, management makes offers that appeal to some of the strikers more than it does to others.

To avoid divisions, the negotiating team must plan for negotiations. They must get a clear mandate from the strikers and refuse to settle unless their demands are met. If they do not settle they must return to the strikers to get a fresh mandate.

Transferring production

Another strategy often used by the bosses is to transfer production to another factory of the company, or to give the production to another company. If we suspect that production will be transferred, we should meet with the workers where production is likely to be transferred.

Impimpis

In any strike it is always possible that some workers provide the bosses with important information. Management could know how strong workers are after a period on strike, or the leaders and hardliners in the strike.

Setting up strike rules

Some companies try and get the union to agree to a set of strike rules before or during a strike. These rule try and curb the militancy of workers and confine them to certain actions and areas during the strike. Such strike rules should be avoided.

Intimidation of workers families

During the strike some companies write letters to the husbands or wives of striking workers telling them that they should encourage their partners to return to work otherwise they will be left without a job and no money.

Victimising shop stewards

A common company strategy is to victimise leaders within the factory. They will try and make sure that they are arrested during pickets. They will also issue notices of disciplinary inquiries against the shop stewards.

Retrenchments & factory closure

The bosses are often willing to use strikes as a way of retrenching workers. They will fire all the workers and only re-employ a section of the workforce. At other times the bosses will threaten workers with retrenchments or factory closure unless they return to work.

Workers should look at these threats closely because sometimes the bosses are serious. The bosses might decide that it is better to close a factory where the union is strong and open up in an area where workers are not unionised.

Chapter Six

After the strike, learn the lessons

In the previous chapters we discussed the importance of strikes in the struggle against capitalism. After a strike it is important to learn the lessons of that strike. Remember that there can be victory in defeat. The practical experience of a strike is worth more than the material gains/ setbacks. Strikes as a "school of war" provide practical insight into the requirements of the struggle for socialism.

- ☛ The material and political gains & losses
- ☛ The impact on workers' political consciousness
- ☛ Evaluate the various phases of the strike
- ☛ Management's counter strategies & tactics
- ☛ The response of the rest of the working class
- ☛ The "aluta continua" preparation

The material and political gains & losses

It is important to be clear on the outcome of the strike: WAS IT A VICTORY OR DEFEAT, A GAIN OR A SETBACK? One should not "cover-up" a defeat. The causes of the victory or defeat must be carefully analysed and understood. We can only build on our experience if we are honest with ourselves.

Any gain or victory, is only a temporary advance. After the strike, management will try to regain the initiative and roll back the material and political gains made by workers. Consolidation after the strike is the only way to effectively counter managements strategies.

The impact on workers' political consciousness

Strikes do more than raise workers consciousness. They also throw up new layers of worker leaders and activists. If a strike is well organised, more workers are forced to take on new political responsibilities. This new leadership must be identified and drawn into the activities and structures of the union.

Evaluate the various phases of the strike

How well did we plan?

We must look at how we planned for the strike. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the preparatory work for the strike?

How strong was the support at the beginning of the strike?

The immediate outbreak of the strike provides a good indication of how well we prepared for the strike.

- What were the immediate practical problems we faced?

- What was the level of discipline?
- Was there a clear sense of purpose?
- What was management's immediate reaction?

How effective was the strike?

After the strike we must assess whether the form of strike selected met the challenges that workers were facing. We need to see if there was flexibility in the strike activity to deal with changing circumstances.

Management's counter strategies and tactics

A strike is a clear struggle between workers and their bosses. To win a strike you have to have an understanding of your opponents. Just as workers learn from a strike, so do management.

We have to ask:

- What were management's counter strategies and tactics?
- How were they implemented?
- Were they anticipated and how did the union deal with them?

WE HAVE TO ASSESS MANAGEMENTS ROLE TO:

- ★ See whether management were prepared for the strike.
 - ★ Understand the weapons they used.
- ★ See whether strikers understood managements power.
- ★ Understand that management will be pre-warned and prepared next time around.

The response of the rest of the working class

What levels and forms of solidarity were given by other workers? What new and creative forms of solidarity action emerged out of the strike from which we can learn?

A strike should unite workers within the factory and as far afield as possible. Different strikes present different opportunities to unite workers. For example, in a large company you may be able to unite workers acrosss the country. A multinational company lends itself to international solidarity. A single plant in a small town, could effectively mobilise workers in that town. After the strike we should look critically at the solidarity action to:

- Highlight levels of preparation.
- Assess the level of workers consciousness generally.
- Assess the organisational capacity of the trade union movement and its allies to organise solidarity action.

The “aluta continua” preparation

After any battle, there are always casualties. The “victor” tries to strengthen and tighten its grip around the “loser”. When management “win” they try to roll back further gains of workers. When workers are the “victors”, management try to reverse the balance of power through retrenchments, short time, the introduction of new machinery and stricter disciplinary measures. Now it is important to consolidate the union organisation in the factory.

New issues/grievances must be identified to keep up the momentum of the workers. Union and COSATU campaigns should be taken up. Consolidation is important to counter the managements' strategies and to build on the organisational gains of the strike.

Glossary of terms

activist - a person who takes the initiative and tries to mobilise and organise people to take action and struggle.

ballot - to ballot is to vote on any issue. A strike ballot is to vote whether to strike.

blacking - this is a type of boycott which is organised by workers. If workers in one company refuse to handle the goods from another where workers are on strike, they are involved in blacking action.

consolidate - this means to evaluate past struggles, learn and build on the advances you have made.

consulate (embassy) - this is the offices of representatives from a foreign government.

dispute - when two parties cannot agree on an issue (eg. increase in wages), they are in dispute.

illegal strike - this is a strike which doesn't follow procedures set down in the law (unprocedural strike).

interdict - an interdict is when the court restricts one party from doing something to another. For example, a company may interdict workers to stop them from entering company premises.

labour costs - these are costs which bosses have to pay in production. It includes wages, medical aid and other costs related to workers.

legal strike - this is a strike which follows the procedures set down in the Labour Relations Act.

means of production - these are the farms, factories and mines. They are those things that are needed to produce goods.

militant - militant means to be prepared and willing to take action and confront your enemies.

mobilise - to mobilise is to educate and organise people to participate in the struggle.

multinational - this is a company which has branches in a number of different countries around the world.

sector - this refers to the different sectors of the economy or chemical industry. In CWIU we recognise the petrochemical, consumer chemical, rubber, plastic and glass sectors in the chemical industry.

spontaneity - spontaneity refers to action which is not necessarily tightly organised. The strikes in 1973 were spontaneous in that they were not centrally organised by any organisation.

strategy/strategies - to have a strategy is to have a plan and programme of how you intend achieving your aims.

ultimatum - this is when management tell workers to do something or they will suffer eg. return to work or you will be fired.