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TRADE UNION LIBRARY AND
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POPCRU Western Cape PEC Orientation Seminar/Workshop

Saturday 25 September 1999

CHAPTER I SECTIONS

- IA The aims and principles of trade unionism**
- IB The history of trade unionism in South
Africa**

SECTION 1A

THE AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF TRADE UNIONISM

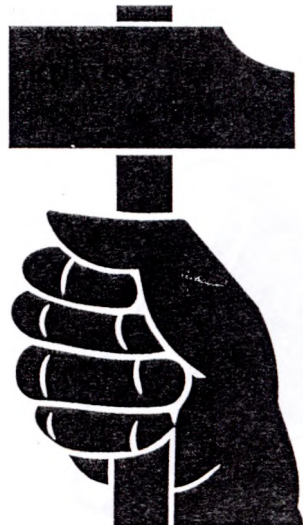
1. There is a struggle in every workplace

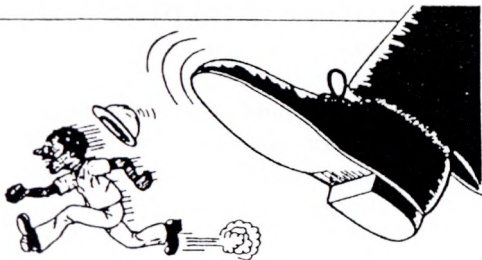
In every workplace there is a struggle. On the one side is the employer who seeks to make as much profit as possible, and on the other side are the workers who want a living wage and decent working conditions. For the employer's pockets to be full, the workers must suffer. For workers to get what they deserve, profits would fall. The interests of bosses and workers are different. This struggle is the spirit of capitalism. It fills the walls of every factory, the shaft of every mine, and the fields of every farm.

But this struggle between bosses and workers is not like a soccer match between two equal teams. The employer has much more power than the worker:

- The employer owns the company.
- The employer has a big store of wealth from profitmaking to rest on.
- The employer has the power to hire and fire workers.
- The employer has the power to make decisions and give orders.
- The employer has easy access to lawyers, politicians and technical resources.

Workers have one thing that bosses want. Their ability to work. But although employers need labour, this does not give an individual worker much bargaining power. Bosses and workers do not meet as equals in the market place, as many capitalist economists would like us to believe. Employers can choose who to employ, because so many people are unemployed and





looking for work. Because workers need a job to survive they are often forced to accept bad conditions, like low wages, long hours, and unsafe working conditions.

The only strength that workers have in relation to the bosses, is their strength as a collective. When they come together to organise and act collectively they have a power which an employer cannot easily ignore.

2. Why workers need trade unions

A worker is weak on her or his own against the employer. This is why employers always try to turn one worker against another. Coloured against black, Xhosa against Zulu, casuals against permanent workers – division makes weakness.

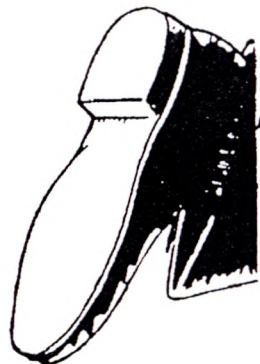
In the history of worker struggle we can see that when workers come together to organise and act collectively against their conditions of employment, they have considerable strength. This has been seen again and again for the last two hundred years in every country in the world. From the early craft associations, to the Luddites in England, to the Syndicalists of the early 20th century, through to the general workers unions and industrial unions of more recent times, workers have found collective confidence and strength in different forms of trade union organisation. Workers have made trade unions into their weapons of struggle, and trade unions have made a huge difference to the lives of workers.

Trade unions are not revolutionary organisations. Workers need political parties for their political struggle. Trade unions have limitations, because they need to defend and advance the interests of workers within the system and institutions of capitalism. Often workers have lost control of their unions, and they have become weapons in the hands of employers. But the history and experience of workers' struggle has shown that trade unions are the first and most important homes for workers. Workers form unions as their first need in struggle. It is here where workers come together to fight against their daily exploitation and develop their confidence as a collective.

3. The aims of trade union organisation

It is out of experience that the broad aims of trade union organisation can be identified:

- (a) To unite workers into a strong and democratic organisation.
- (b) To challenge the power and interests of the employers on behalf of the workers.
- (c) To negotiate with employers
 - for recognition by the employer of the union and the shopstewards
 - for decent wages and conditions of work
- (d) To protect workers
 - from unfair dismissals and unfair labour practices
 - from discrimination and abuse
 - from employers breaking agreements
- (e) To educate workers
 - on their rights at work and how to enforce these rights
 - on how to carry out their trade union tasks
 - on wider social and political issues affecting them
- (f) To represent the interests of workers
 - at plant, company, and industry level
 - in negotiations with employer and government bodies
- (g) To take legal action when necessary in the interests of workers.
- (h) To unite with other unions and progressive organisations to strengthen the demands and actions of workers.
- (i) To fight for workers rights and interests in the community and in the country as a whole.



4. The principles of progressive trade unionism

Trade unions have not always been the same throughout history. Workers' needs and experiences have brought many changes in how unions operate and how they are structured. These experiences and lessons have crossed national borders, so that trade union traditions are international. The shop steward structures that we know so well, the development of industrial unions, and the coming together of unions into federations, are traditions that have deep roots in many parts of the world.

In the history of trade unions in South Africa and across the world, trade unions have developed certain progressive principles to make sure that they always stand for workers' interests. These principles include the following:

(a) Democracy:

- All workers who are members of the union are equal. All have the same rights and duties. This means that the union has to fight against all forms of racism and sexism among its members.
- Final decisions are taken by majority vote.
- Members elect representatives who speak and act for them.
- Elected worker representatives must always speak and act with a mandate from the workers they represent. They must always give report-backs to the members.

(b) Worker control

- The union is not the office. The union is the members.
- Workers must be in a majority in union structures.
- The union must seek all ways for its worker members to participate in decision-making.
- The union must seek to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of its members through education programmes.

(c) National industrial trade unions

- Big national industrial trade unions are stronger than smaller unions and can fight better for their members' interests.
- Even big national industrial unions must have firm roots at plant, local and regional levels.

(d) Political and social involvement

- Trade unions are based at the workplace. Their first job is to advance and defend the interests of their members at work.
- But no union is really doing its job if it closes its eyes to the struggles and problems that workers face in the society as a whole.
- For this reason progressive trade unions should fight for workers interests in all areas of life.

(e) Independence

Even if a union is involved in politics and even if it makes an alliance with a political organisation it must stay under the control of its members.

These principles are an important reference for unionists. They need to be approached critically and creatively. For example, *industrial* unionism has developed as a central feature of union organisation, but this does not mean that a *general* union could not be a better form of organisation in certain circumstances and under different conditions.

These principles need to be understood as living traditions that must constantly be built and defended. They are products of struggle. The experience and practice of any principle is affected by changing conditions of struggle and organisation. For example, the development of corporatism in industrial relations in the 1990s has seriously challenged the traditions of worker control and democracy that were developed and practised in the 1970s and 1980s.



SECTION 1B

THE HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

What follows is an adapted version of an extract from the *ILRIG Workshop on Trade Union History in South Africa*

The first unions for black workers

In 1917, workers and peasants in the Soviet Union carried out the most important revolution in the history of our struggle for socialism. Here in South Africa at that time, very few black workers were organised. There were trade unions, but most of their members were white workers. There was a political party that said that it was socialist – the Labour Party – but it collaborated with the bosses and their political parties, and only allowed white members.

But the politics of the Russian Revolution reached South Africa and entered into the hearts of a few socialists. At that time, they came together in an organisation called the International Socialist League. Later, with others, they formed the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). Many of them were middle class whites. Others were officials in the white trade unions. Slowly, they began to take the idea of the Russian Revolution to black workers. And they found workers with many needs, many problems, and people who were already in struggle.

The first trade union organisation for African workers was called the Industrial Workers of Africa. You could put all the members of that organisation into one room. But even from that time, thousands of workers who were not in organisations were already struggling against the bosses and their government. Already they were burning passes, and boycotting against high prices, and striking for wage increases. Even if they did not have the ideal of socialism in their heads, they were engaged in struggle.

At that time, it was not just the organisation of workers that was young. Industry in South Africa was also young. As capitalist industry developed, the power and wealth of the bosses grew. But the same process saw the size and strength

of the working class grow as well. And inside the working class, the number of black workers, and their importance for capitalist production, also increased.

The 1922 white mineworkers' strike

At the centre of the growing capitalist economy in South Africa was the gold mining industry. It was also the heart of militant worker struggle in the first two decades of the century. But white and black workers did not fight side by side, and the strikes by white mineworkers in 1907, 1913 and 1922, were directed largely against the increasing numbers of black workers coming onto the mines. The mining bosses were determined to undermine the job colour bar that protected white jobs, so that they could employ black workers at lower wages. The white miners resisted this.

In 1921, when mining profits were falling, the bosses came with a plan to retrench many semi-skilled white miners and replace them with black workers. 24 000 white miners embarked on a militant strike which grew into the Rand Revolt, under the slogan "Workers of the world unite and fight for a white South Africa!" The government, led by Smuts, crushed the revolt with violence and the mining bosses were able to attack the jobs of white workers.

In the election of 1924, whites voted Smuts out of government, and elected the Pact government of the Nationalist and Labour parties. It was this government which passed the Industrial Conciliation Act which gave rights and privileges to white workers and drew their unions into legal industrial relations machinery in order to make strike action more difficult. This was the end of the chapter of white worker militancy and the entrenchment of a racial divide in the working class.

The 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act was also a first step towards "institutionalising" labour relations – a first step which has been succeeded by many others, including; the apartheid state's adoption of the 1979 Wiehahn reforms and its 1988 Labour Relations Amendment Act, and now by the consensus-seeking 1995 Labour Relations Act.

The ICU- mass organisation

But it was not only the white mineworkers who were organising in the 1920s. Struggle and organisation spread across the country like a veld fire. Another organisation was formed – the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). At the same time, the small ANC became more militant, and the CPSA began to work more with black workers.

The ICU was not just an organisation for workers. Inside the ICU were teachers, churchmen, and peasants who were being thrown off the land. There were chiefs and even businessmen. They were all together in one organisation, fighting against racial oppression. But they were not always all fighting for the same thing. Inside the ICU the workers were not strongly organised to speak with their own voice; there was little worker democracy and no workers control. Leaders began to compete with one another, and the ICU split into many different pieces. And as that happened, at the end of the 1920s, the state attacked.

Capitalist crisis and state attacks

During the 1920s the international capitalist system was experiencing a crisis and the state could not tolerate a movement of struggle that was growing. So it attacked the movement – with murder, vigilantes, arrests, banishments. And the truth is that it attacked an organisation that was already weak from its own internal problems.

This was a time of bitter struggle. Some turned to the Communist Party. Ten thousand joined the trade unions in a federation called the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions (FNETU) and then the African Federation of Trade Unions (AFTU) that was led by members of the Communist Party. Inside the Communist Party, there were some who stuck to the politics of the 1917 revolution. But others started to follow the politics and undemocratic methods of Stalinism. Stalinist politics and methods led to many expulsions and division-within workers' organisations.

The growth of industry meant the growing strength and organisation of the working and class

The state attacks were successful and the bosses went into the 1930s feeling strong and confident. Industry and profits grew. But the strength and determination of the working class also grew. The government and the rich farmers were successful in forcing thousands of people off the land. But those people came to the towns looking for jobs and houses and all the things that urban workers also need. There, in the growing towns, they were not on their own. They found hundreds and thousands of workers just like themselves. So they turned to one another for strength and support and organisations began to grow again. The number of strikes increased.

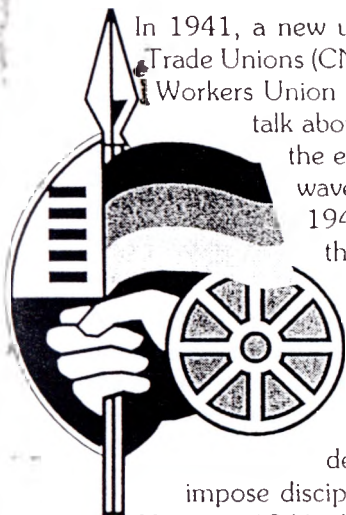
By the end of the 1930s there were two groups of unions:

- the Co-ordination Committee (with about 4 000 members);
- the Joint Committee (with about 20 000 members).

But again, there were leaders who would not work with others in the struggle who had different politics from theirs. And again, it was the bosses who were the ones to benefit.

The war, the ANC, and new mass organisation

In 1939, the South African government took South Africa into the imperialist world war. The war increased the bargaining strength of black workers. Many of the white workers joined the army and blacks took their places. The government was desperate for production to continue to help in the war effort and began moves towards reform. The number of strikes began to grow.



In 1941, a new union federation called the Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) was formed. In the same year, the African Mine Workers Union (AMWU) was also formed. The government began to talk about reforms, even getting rid of the pass laws. Then, at the end of 1942 and 1943, workers built the biggest strike wave there had ever been in the history of South Africa. In 1943 there was a bus boycott in Alexandra township. And then in 1944 there was a massive struggle of squatters for land and houses in the urban areas near Johannesburg.

The government responded by introducing a new law which made all strikes illegal. The talk about reforms disappeared, and the government and the bosses demanded that the leaders of the workers organisations impose discipline. At this time, after Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, the Communist Party was also supporting the war. But more and more workers decided that the issues right in front of them were more important than supporting the war effort. So they took action. Often, that action did not have the support of the union leadership. And often, one group of workers taking action was isolated from another.

In 1944, the AMWU held a conference, and one delegate after another demanded strike action. But the leadership convinced the workers to wait. In 1946, after the end of the war, workers would wait no longer. They built the biggest strike ever – and the same government that spoke about change and reform and cooperation during the war, broke the strike with guns and bayonets. With the policy of cooperation with the government, and then the defeat of the miners strike, CNETU began to crumble as a fighting force. In 1945, it had 158 000 members. A few years later it did not exist any more.

In 1948, white voters elected a Nationalist government. They took over from a government which had already declared all strikes illegal and had broken the miners strike through violence and intimidation, and when union organisation of black workers had already been weakened.

One of the first tasks which that government set itself was to tighten its influence over the white workers. For a long time, Nationalist politicians from the middle class and capitalists had their eyes on the white workers, especially the Afrikaners speaking white workers. They wanted their support and their strength. It was not so hard to deepen racism and tie the white workers to the bosses and their political parties with promises. These things had already been happening for years, with the help of the Labour Party and conservative white trade union leaders. More and more white workers began to see their future with the Nationalists. Many of them were Afrikaners who were driven off the land by the same capitalist crisis that drove black people off the land at the beginning of the 1930s.

The new Nationalist government took action against the few union leaders who were trying to bring progressive politics to the white workers. They took action to outlaw united organisation between black and white workers. More and more white workers turned to the promises coming from the new Nationalist government and put their hopes in an alliance with the bosses against black workers.

Amongst black workers, the anger began to grow. They were now facing the apartheid government. They had to go home from exploitation at work to townships that were getting more and more crowded; without proper housing, or electricity, or child-care or schools. They had to face a government which was trying to increase its control over black workers through the Group Areas Act and forced removals.

So, in the 1950s, there was mass organisation and mass action again. The ANC launched the Defiance Campaign. For a generation, workers had already been defying the pass laws. Now they turned to the ANC. For the first time in its history, workers made the ANC a real mass organisation. Later, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was formed. Still there were many questions confronting workers in struggle:

- How could workers defend themselves against the attacks from the bosses and the government?
- What was the best way forward in the struggle for the day-to-day needs of the working class?
- How could the Nationalist government be defeated?

- Could there be an alliance between workers and the bosses who exploited them but who said they opposed the Nationalist government?
- What link should there be between the unions and the ANC?
- What was the link between the struggle against apartheid and the struggle for socialism? What politics could best take workers forward?

Struggle and repression in the 1950s and 1960s

In the 1940s and the 1950s workers grew more and more confident to fight against their poverty and oppression. And at this time workers and all the oppressed built their organisations like the ANC, PAC and SACTU. Through these organisations workers built unity and mass action. There was the Defiance Campaign, the Freedom Charter Campaign, and the Pound a Day Campaign. There were strikes and protests and national stayaways.

In 1960 the government responded with force. Protesters were shot dead at Sharpeville, leaders were arrested, and the ANC and PAC were banned. But this did not stop the struggle. In the following year the Congress Alliance called for a three-day stayaway against this repression. It was the biggest stayaway at that time, but it was also the last national strike for many years.

After 1961, the Congress movement decided that its non-violent strategy was not enough to win power in South Africa. The sabotage campaign, and later the armed struggle, began. Many SACTU organisers became involved in this underground struggle. Many others were detained and jailed and went into exile. Workers could no longer participate in the organisations that they had built. The confidence of workers to struggle was still there; it carried on for two years after 1961. But when their organisations went underground it was much harder for ordinary workers to fight.

During the 1960s workers became less confident to struggle. They no longer had fighting unions. There was no mass action and mass organisation. But workers did not forget what they had done in the past. They carried their history with them. So even if the bosses and the government felt strong in the 1960s; even if they increased their attacks on workers in a thousand different ways, even if they made bigger profits than ever before, workers were not defeated. The day of new mass action and new mass organisation was coming.

The rebirth of organisation and struggle in the 1970s

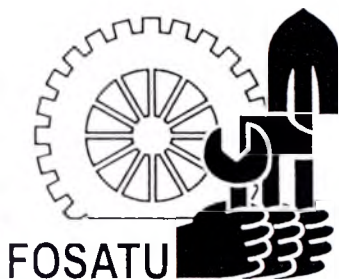
The first big sign that workers were once again ready to struggle came when 60000 workers in Durban went on strike for higher wages. The strikes in 1973 were the beginning of a new determination of workers to struggle. An international crisis in capitalism saw bosses profits drop everywhere. And when bosses profits drop, the burden is always passed on to workers. For years and years workers in South Africa had laboured for low wages. But in the early 1970s price increases pushed the value of workers' wages even lower. Workers were confident once again to express their anger. This was the time when workers came out of the darkness of the 1960's and began to build their movement of struggle once again.

Workers rebuilt unions in different ways. Some joined industry-based unions like MAWU, NUTW, CWIU, CCAWUSA and SFAWU. Others joined the general unions like SAAWU and GWU. Different approaches to organising workers also carried different politics. Many union activists carried with them the SACTU tradition of political unionism. They brought an important pressure on the newly emerging union organisations to develop links beyond the factory floor. Others, critical of this approach and keeping their distance from politics, emphasised the importance of building strong workplace structures that could withstand state repression. They stressed the importance of building democratic worker control of the trade unions, of building shop steward structures in the factories, and fighting for recognition from employers.

The bosses and the government did not just sit back and let this happen. They attacked workers' organisations; they met workers' action with violence and dismissals; and they detained and banned leaders. The bosses and government promoted and formed liaison committees and works councils (which they appointed) at the workplace, to undermine the emerging independent unions. At that time the law said that workers could not have non-racial trade unions. Black workers were not included in how the law defined "employees". But this did not stop workers. Worker struggle forced the government to reform the law and to recognise the right of black workers to build trade unions. In 1979, based on the Wiehahn Commission's recommendations, the government reformed the Labour Relations Act, allowing non-racial unions to be recognised on condition that they registered with the Minister of Manpower.

A debate ensued during the early 1980s regarding whether progressive unions should register or not. Some unions felt that registering would threaten their independence and allow the apartheid government to control them. Others thought that the threat of control by the government was not so serious, and

that the new law provided much-needed legal space for unions to organise, be recognised, and make gains for their members. Most unions, especially from CUSA and FOSATU, adopted for the latter position.



The new laws gave workers the confidence to build even bigger organisation and action. Organisation started again on the mines. Unions came together in the federations, FOSATU, CUSA, and AZACTU. There were important strikes like the meatworkers' strike, the Fattis and Monis strike, and the strikes in the car factories of the Eastern Cape. Working class communities,

assisted by unions like SAAWU and GAWU, also built powerful struggles around housing and education.

Going to war against the apartheid state in the 1980s

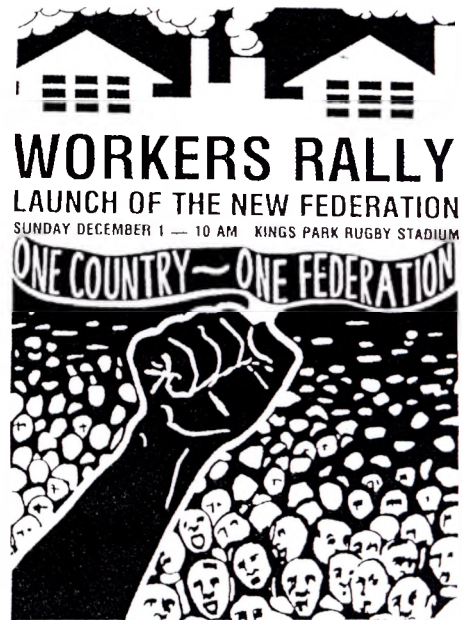
One of the biggest questions of that time was how to build trade union struggle together with community struggle and political struggle. There were different answers and different strategies coming from different organisations. The politics of banned organisations like the ANC was alive in the hearts of many. Some unions joined the United Democratic Front (UDF). Some unions had Black Consciousness politics. Some unions said they must stay independent of community and political organisations.

Sometimes the different strategies gave rise to division and conflict. In 1976 the youth fought against the government without building unity with workers. But the movement learned from that problem, and built a powerful united front of struggle in the Vaal Stayaway in 1984. Even with the division and conflict that grew out of political differences, this period saw a blossoming of different forms of working class organisations in the workplace and in the community: industrial unions, general unions, industrial locals, community-based locals. A variety of structures that drew together organised workers, youth, women, and civic activists made up a rich tradition of creative organisation.

It was really in 1984 and 1985 that workers and the youth went to war against the government. Workers took important steps to build their organised unity. From 1981 unions were involved in unity talks. This led to the launch of Cosatu in 1985 and, shortly afterwards, to the formation of Nactu. The second half of the 1980s saw some of the biggest struggles of workers in our history. There was the OK workers' strike for a living wage in 1986. There was the big

miners' strike, led by the NUM, and the SARHWU strike in 1987. In 1988 millions of workers campaigned against amendments to the Labour Relations Act that the government was trying to introduce. From 1989 to 1990 there were more strikes than ever before in our history.

It was during the 1980s that workers achieved things that they had only dreamed about. Different unions came together into big industrial unions. Unions had come together into powerful federations. Inside the unions workers had built a strong tradition of democratic worker control and worker leadership. Millions of workers joined trade unions for the first time. National campaigns were organised for a Living Wage, a Worker's LRA, and for the Workers Charter. Unions built strong links with youth organisations, civics, women's organisations, and political organisations. One union after another adopted the Freedom Charter as a programme that could point the way in the struggle for socialism.



Into the 1990s – victories and weaknesses

Even at the time when the organisation and struggle of workers was at its height in the 1980s, there were also big problems. The defeat of the miners' strike in 1987, the attacks on Cosatu, and all the repression during the states of emergency, took strength out of the movement. However, these struggles were not wasted and, together with international pressure, forced the hand of the government. They laid the basis for the biggest victory of the 1980s, when the Nationalist government unbanned our organisations, released our leaders, and admitted that the days of apartheid were over. This was the fruit of our struggle.

But bosses and their governments never just roll over and die. They had come to the point where they had to make a serious choice. They were prepared to throw apartheid away so that they could defend capitalism. They were looking for a strategy that would shift the power back into their hands. They saw a

chance when socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe collapsed, leaving capitalism with the confidence to establish a new world order.

It was through a negotiated settlement that we held our first democratic elections and elected the ANC into government with a huge majority. The period since 1994 has seen a political transformation that we never dreamed could happen in our lifetime. The development of a political democracy is a huge victory for the struggle of workers and all the oppressed.

But even with this victory, big problems have developed; so that today workers are less confident and less in control of their organisations and their struggle than they were ten years ago. There are many reasons for this, including:

- the ongoing decline in the living standards of workers;
- the adoption of neo-liberal capitalist politics by the ANC in government which encourage privatisation, deregulation, flexibility – and a range of other policies which threaten the livelihood and security of workers;
- the development of an individualistic and competitive culture which undermines workers' traditions of collectivism;
- a growing tendency for the ANC government to blame workers for having “unrealistic expectations” – while all around them workers see corruption and continuing vast inequalities in wealth
- the development of corporatism which seeks to develop consensus and joint responsibility between unions, business and government at all levels of industrial relations and economic policy
- the weakness and confusion of socialist politics and the lack of a clear political leadership within workers' organisations

If our own history has taught us one thing, it is that our traditions and spirit of struggle do not die easily. Workers carried their experiences of the first 50 years of this century through the repressive darkness of the 1960s, and used these as a foundation for building a powerful working class movement of struggle in the 1970s and 1980s. Even now, in the late 1990s, when we feel confused about our direction and about what has happened to the politics of our organisations, with our rich history, we can feel confident that workers have the ability to change things.



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SECTION 6B

WORKPLACE RESTRUCTURING AND NEW MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

The following article was written by Marlea Clarke, a researcher for the International Labour Resource and Information Group. It is followed by a British case study on dealing with workplace restructuring.

Workers in South Africa, like workers around the world, are being affected by workplace restructuring. Workplace restructuring refers to a variety of changes in the production process and in the way work is organised. New machinery and new technologies have been introduced, as have new management techniques. These changes have resulted in new patterns of employment (more part-time, casual and temporary work) and unemployment (more permanent 'seasonal' unemployment).

Shifts in production processes, new forms of employment and new ways of organising work all have profound effects on workers and trade unions. The development of strategic responses and advancing alternative forms of work reorganisation (forms which increase rather than decrease workers control over production processes) are some of the key challenges facing most unions.

Over the last twenty years, there has been a steady shift globally away from economies driven by manufacturing industries, to economies dominated by employment in the service sector. For most countries in the western world (Europe, the United States and Canada) and for many countries in the south (including South Africa), economic growth after World War II was based on inward oriented production and consumption of mass produced goods. For the most part, assembly-line production of standardized goods characterised this growth period (for example, the mass production of cars in individual factories for sale domestically). Named after Henry Ford and the Ford car, the period between the mid 1940s and the late 1960s became known as 'Fordist production'.

Recent shifts in the production process away from standardised production of goods on assembly lines, to 'flexible' production process and the production of specialised goods is often referred to as 'post-fordism'. Post-fordist production is often characterised by an emphasis on product quality, variety and differentiation, speed of innovation and Japanised production and inventory control techniques ('Just-in-time production', or 'JIT'). New management techniques such as team work and quality circles are also part of the restructuring process.

Overall, workplace restructuring includes a variety of changes: the introduction of new machinery and new technology; shift changes to allow for continuous production; decentralising production (sub-contracting work to smaller firms or hiring non-permanent workers); reorganisation of work (e.g. team-based work); new payment schemes (such as production bonuses) to encourage workers to work harder and longer; and the shift towards producing more specialised goods.

What all this means is that the way work used to be organised has changed — standard work hours and the standard worker are being replaced by 'non-standard' work and more flexible workers. Non-standard work includes casual, part-time, sub-contracted and homebased work. This type of worker is cheaper for the employer as usually only permanent workers have some degree of job security and receive benefits such as paid leave, pension, and sick pay.

There are many examples of these changes in South Africa and in other countries. In Canada, permanent, full-time work is shrinking while non-standard work is rapidly expanding. In 1989, over 33% of workers were officially employed in this sector. In South Africa's past subcontracting only really took place on a small scale (and mostly in the service sector). But the last few years have seen a rise in sub-contracting in the manufacturing sector and the introduction of more flexible work practices. The introduction of more flexible production is likely to lead to the break-up of large enterprises into smaller enterprises or lower cost, non-unionised 'sweatshops'. This move towards sub-contracting work is already clear in the service sector. Most 'non-essential work' (cleaning, cooking, maintenance, security) is being contracted out to independent companies, and the work is being done by casual, non-unionised workers. A similar trend is emerging on university campuses and in hospitals around the country.

Are all countries and industries being effected by workplace restructuring in the same way? Very clearly not. While many forms of 'post-fordist' production have been introduced in industries and countries throughout the world, many industries and many countries still have old machinery in operation and are organised almost like 'sweat-shops' for the rich countries of the North and for

the benefit of big business. While dramatic changes have taken place in sectors in South Africa like the auto industry, there is a huge difference in the degree of mechanisation. For example, it has often been cited that it takes the Toyota city plant in Japan less than a week to produce as many vehicles as one Toyota factory in South Africa produces in a year.

Why are these changes taking place? Over the last twenty years, the global nature of capitalist production, trade and finance has reached a higher level than ever before. Capitalists did this in order to deal with the global economic crisis and to escape some of the regulation imposed on them by governments. These changes in production, trade and finance at an international level are often referred to as *globalisation*.

Today there is a high level of integration between individual countries, and between individual countries and the global economy. This increased integration, and increased competitiveness has meant most countries have implemented policies of trade liberalisation, privatisation, and the de-regulation of labour markets. For most workers, the restructuring of work which has accompanied this push toward international competitiveness has meant retrenchments, the introduction of new machinery (which often means multi-tasking), shift changes to allow for continuous operation of factories, and the introduction of new management techniques.

These changes have already had negative affects on many workers. Firms have been closed, jobs have been lost, and full-time, permanent work is being replaced by part-time, casual and temporary work. Some unions in South Africa are beginning to develop strategies to address these problems. CWIU



has an agreement on workplace restructuring; Numsa, Saccawu, Samwu and other unions are carrying out research into workplace restructuring in their sectors and starting to challenge the way business is implementing these changes.

Pushing for strict regulation standards of work is another way unions can begin to counter this push toward cheaper, more flexible workers. Legislation to guarantee minimum labour standards to all workers is one important step in protecting workers and challenging re-regulation. In South Africa, the implementation and enforcement of the new Basic Conditions of Employment Legislation may contribute to the struggle for better and more secure forms of employment. At the same time workers and unions around the world need to continue challenging forms of work organisation that result in more work, decreased workers control in the workplace, and increased casualisation. Workplace restructuring which increases workers control over production and increases workplace democracy should be at the forefront of struggles around workplace restructuring.

NEHAWU
MASS MEETING
 on
WEDNESDAY
27 AUGUST 1997
 at
1h15 - 14h00 Cosatu
AGENDA
VENUE: *RATIONALIZATION
SI

SPEAKERS:
 SRC
 UWCASA
 STUDENT LEAGUE
 NEHAWU

TRANSFORMATION FOR UWC
 the way Forward!!

Nehawu call on all workers to join and support Nehawu

The following section is a case study of the British Transport and General Workers Union strategy in dealing with workplace restructuring and new management techniques, and is reproduced with their kind permission.

CHANGE AT WORK: The T & G View

The new management techniques present real challenges to union members and representatives. This booklet has outlined their two main elements – the introduction of new forms of employee relations and changes in production techniques.

In both of these areas, the T & G has a major role to play in shaping the workplace of the future. There is no precise formula for dealing with the new management techniques. All companies are different, operating in different market situations. Equally, the Union may vary in strength from workplace to workplace, and the proposed programme of changes may incorporate whole 'packages', or be implemented in a piecemeal way. Like pay negotiations, there is no simple formula that can be applied across the board in every workplace.

It is important, however, to develop positive responses and to take advantage of any opportunities for progress for T & G members. These techniques offer employees (and sometimes the Union) new opportunities, for example, empowerment, trust, jointness, openness, ownership of the work process and honesty are all offered as part of total quality management (TQM), as are upskilling and improvements in training.

A vital ingredient in maintaining a union presence is to involve the Union with management in testing whether these are genuine offers and taking advantage of them to improve the company's industrial relations and secure benefits for the members.

In practice there are only two real options for a trade union:

- to force the company to drop its approach altogether, or
- to participate fully, organise in a new way, and really take on the issue of quality of working life.

In other words, we cannot walk away from TQM and pretend it is not happening. We could end up with a TQM workplace – but without a Union. Trade Union strategy has to be based on a mixture of defence and involvement.

What this booklet aims to do is to help provide you with the knowledge and confidence to make judgements:

- about what is reasonable and what is unacceptable;

- about what management's motives really are;
- about what it is essential to defend;
- about the positive agenda for negotiation you should be putting forward in your workplace.

The T&G has its own Mission Statement in the aims set out in the T&G Rule Book. In "Focus for the future", approved by the 1993 Biennial Delegate Conference, the union's aim was described as follows:

The T&G is:

- an organisation of working people
- built on volunteers
- based on collective action

We must therefore defend and win for our members at the place of work

Here are some suggestions designed to assist you to develop an active union approach.

■ **Union education**

Union training of shop stewards and members is essential. If you don't understand what HRM is all about, you are likely to end up in an unsatisfactory situation.

■ **Early warning**

At the earliest stage, ask management what changes they are seeking and get them to set out their plans in full. The employer should provide all the necessary business and financial information, including details of gains they expect to achieve. Get them to make a commitment to maintain the role of the union in **all** functions-not just wage bargaining. Getting disclosure of information, using legal rights, can be very useful. Seek out 'best practice' already established in other unionised workplaces.

■ **Start with the collective agreement**

It is best to use your own collective agreement as the starting point.

The alarm bells should ring, if management propose a completely new agreement. Seek advice from your union official.

■ **Canvassing opinion**

Prepare your members for the company seeking their views on an individual or small group basis. The aim may be to undermine trade union (collective) organisation and, instead of speaking with one voice, the workforce may play into management's hands by speaking with many.

■ Security and co-operation go hand in hand

Management will need the ideas and cooperation of the workforce. Co-operation should not be freely given, before seeking firm assurances on such matters as:

- jobs: there should be no compulsory retrenchments; indeed, job security should be seen as an essential way of engaging workers in accepting changes.
- protection for older or less able workers who may have difficulty in gaining the new skills or adjusting to the new more flexible world;
- all essential union facilities, like time off for trade union education and time to communicate with members being agreed by the company

■ Bargaining units

Frequently employers try to break down bargaining groups into smaller units. The intention is to weaken union solidarity. Employers will seek to justify this by saying that the company is being broken up into smaller business units. This should be resisted. It is common for bargaining to cover a number of business units.

■ Casual employment

Avoid the casualisation of the workforce due to the introduction of temporary or agency labour. Temporary workers should only be introduced by agreement, ensuring that proper terms and conditions are met. Make sure also that any such workers are properly organised and represented within the union. Agreements often limit the duration of temporary contracts to prevent casual work replacing permanent jobs.

■ Contracting out/ outsourcing

Resist unnecessary contracting out of services such as catering, cleaning or security. If this has already happened, look out for recruitment opportunities, ensure that proper terms and conditions are being met, and avoid the extension of this practice to the outsourcing of components and services. In the public sector especially, systems of "Compulsive Competitive tendering" and "market testing" have been introduced. These force the direct workforce to compete with the cheapest outside companies. Management usually say that they need to contract out to gain the benefit of a specialist company. If you cannot prevent contracting out, ensure that workers' rights are protected, ensure that equivalent pay and conditions apply to workers in contracted out services and that they are represented by the union.

■ **Build branch resources**

You need some of your own resources. Establish a union branch or workplace trade union fund, which can be paid for by an addition to weekly union contribution.

■ **Communication with members**

You need to improve communication with members. Whatever techniques and methods you use, this is a vital area for monitoring of HRM. Union involvement with the membership through shopfloor meetings, branch meetings and other traditional techniques, is vital. You may consider obtaining a personal computer with wordprocessing and desk-top publishing packages. Use programmes that are compatible with the unions own programmes. Also, electronic mail is increasingly being used by the union movement. The production of regular newsletters on current production issues is a most important way of communicating with your members.

■ **Health and safety**

Health and safety represents a top priority for union members. Intensified work and greater responsibility can cause stress and undermine health and safety by "cutting corners".

Unions have many legal rights under health and safety legislation, including the rights to have union safety representatives. Safety representatives have rights to information, to inspect the workplace and to call in safety inspectors. The union also has an excellent record of winning compensation for members when accidents occur.

Taking up health and safety issues is an excellent way of demonstrating the union's relevance to members, engaging with employers on matters of common interest and asserting the role of an independent union organisation. The good work that we should, of course, always be communicating to members.

Lean production/world class processes should not be at the expense of our members' health and safety.

■ **Pensions**

Pensions can be threatened by job insecurity, casualisation, individual contracts and performance related pay. But, like health and safety, this is an area where unions can exercise rights as members of pension boards and demonstrate the importance of independent union representation to members and management alike.

■ **Equal opportunities**

Without union vigilance, the drive to lean production and TQM can discriminate against women or particular sections of the workforce. For example, moves to contract out service to outside firms, or to introduce performance related pay can result in disadvantages for women workers. Unless the pay system is 'transparent', an equal pay case is unlikely to succeed. Increased work speed, stress or changed working hours can be especially difficult for parents of young children or other carers. Selection of people for training or promotion or pay supplements should be scrutinised to ensure fairness for all. Standing up for equal opportunities is a way of demonstrating union relevance, often at little cost to the employer. There are also legal rights, such as anti-discrimination laws and rights for pregnant workers which can assist union representatives.

Traditionally, manual workers have had different, generally worse, terms and conditions of work than white collar workers. For example manual workers often have to clock on and off, work longer hours, and have worse sick pay than clerical or supervisory staff.

■ **Single status**

"Single status" means having the same terms and conditions for all workers. Unions have sometimes been forced to resist single status for manual and non manual workers, because of the strings attached', such as the weakening of collective bargaining rights. Increasingly however the T&G has taken the initiative on demanding single status and harmonisation between manual and white collar workers, including on sick pay and hours of work.

■ **Individual contracts**

Avoid individual contracts - they are designed to set worker against worker and increase divisive competition. These schemes give management too much power over individual workers. Sometimes, cash incentives are offered to workers to sign away their collective rights. Workers must ask themselves why such money is offered.

Individual contracts are worthwhile to employers because they save costs in the future. Where individual contracts have been forced in, individual union representation must be vigorously defended, and, even in these cases, workers value the role unions can play in setting the rules/guidelines which govern individual pay, conditions, appeals procedures, etc.

■ **Shop stewards**

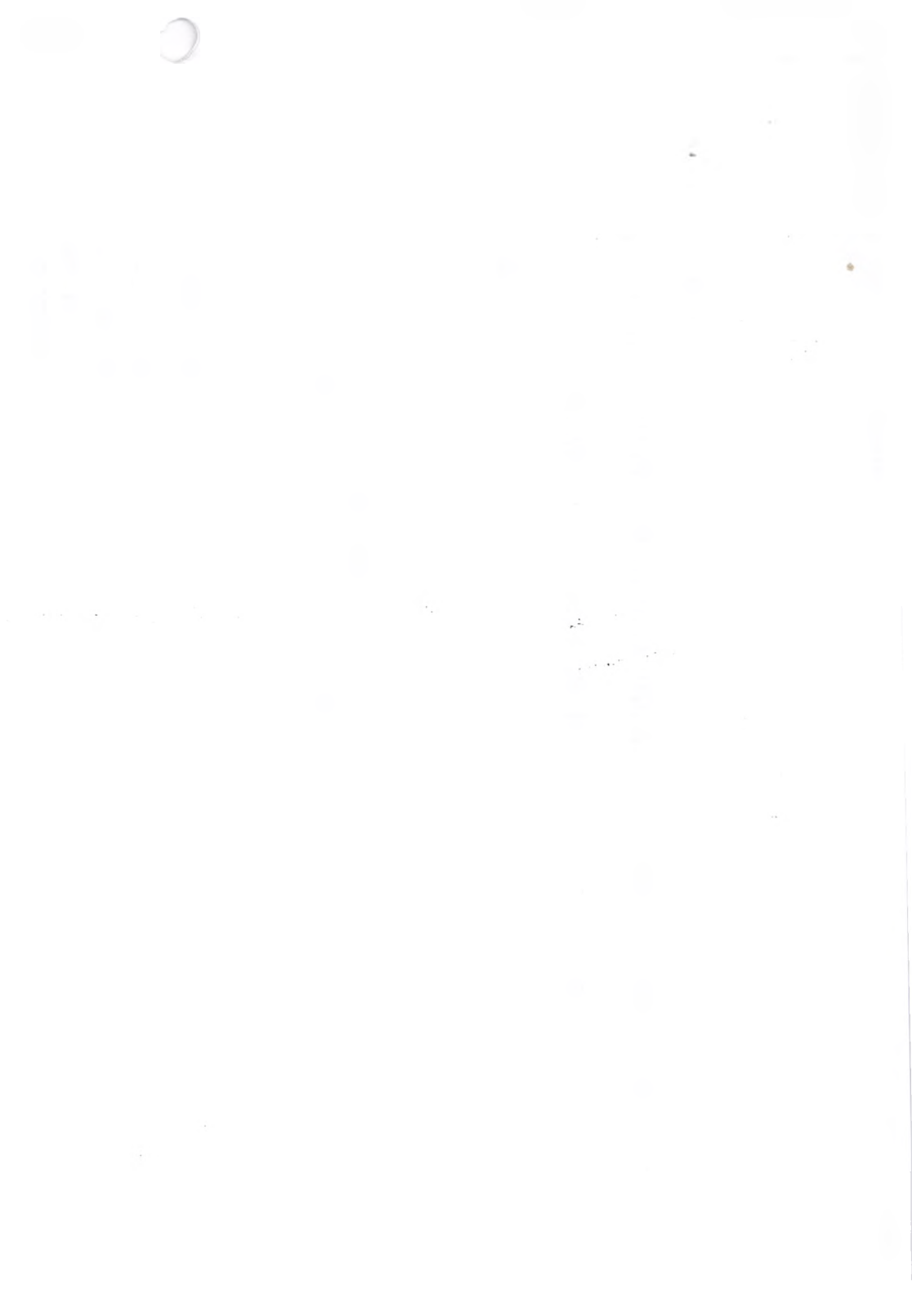
Aim to maintain or increase the number of shop stewards/staff representatives. When companies introduce HRM/TQM, they often seek to reduce the

number of stewards. The need for effective shopstewards, however, is just as important under the new working practices.

■ **Independent union organisation is essential**

Protect independent trade union organisation, ensuring that it is completely separate from the employer. Management will meet together to discuss company strategy without you being there. We must meet as trade unionists, free from company influence to determine what is best for our members. Maintain or establish links with other plants in your company or with trade unionists in other companies, to avoid being played off against each other. Derecognition is totally unacceptable. We must be constantly vigilant, to spot moves to derecognise or marginalise the union and to take steps to resist such a move.

-
- * **Remember:** *Sl/he who communicates is King*
Educate and communicate with your members,
-



SECTION 1

HANDOUT 1: UNION ORGANISATION & HOW THINGS WORK TOGETHER

From the discussion we have had so far, the following key points emerge:

PURPOSE

Build strong organisation to:

Defends members and worker rights.

Advance member and worker interests.

Play active role at workplace, in industries, the economy & society in general.

WORK

To do this the union does the following :

sets up structures to build its organisation

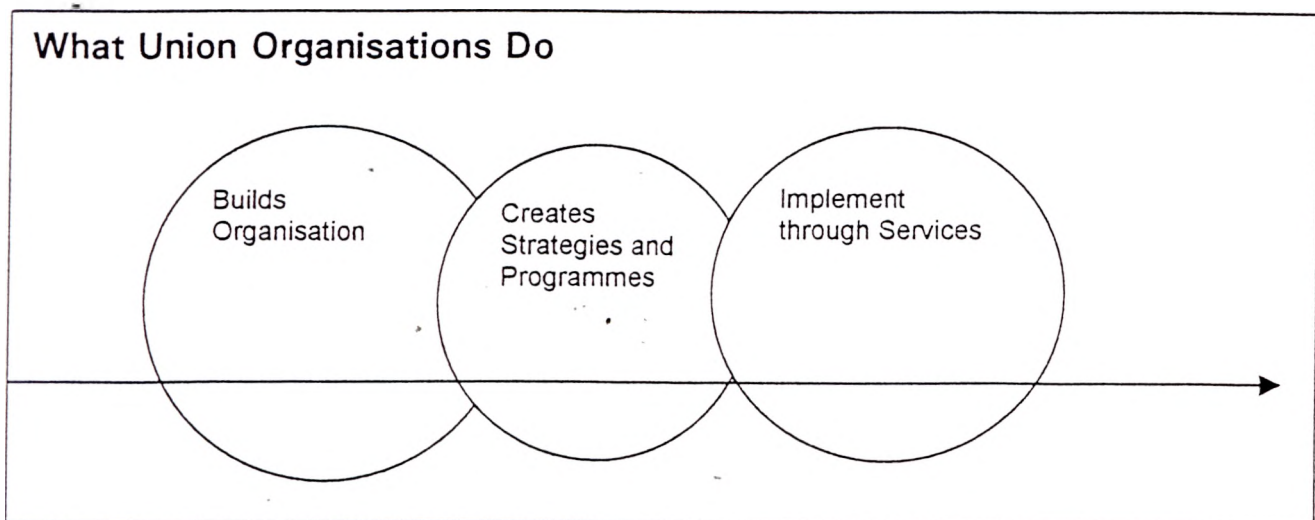
sets aims and objectives and policies

devises action programmes and strategies to achieve aims and objectives

sets up organisational structures and work programmes to implement the above

It is important that you understand the difference between the Purpose of the Union and the Work that it does. The purpose of the Union is not to build organisation - that is one of the ways in which it achieves its Purpose.

Diagrammatically, this could be represented as follows:

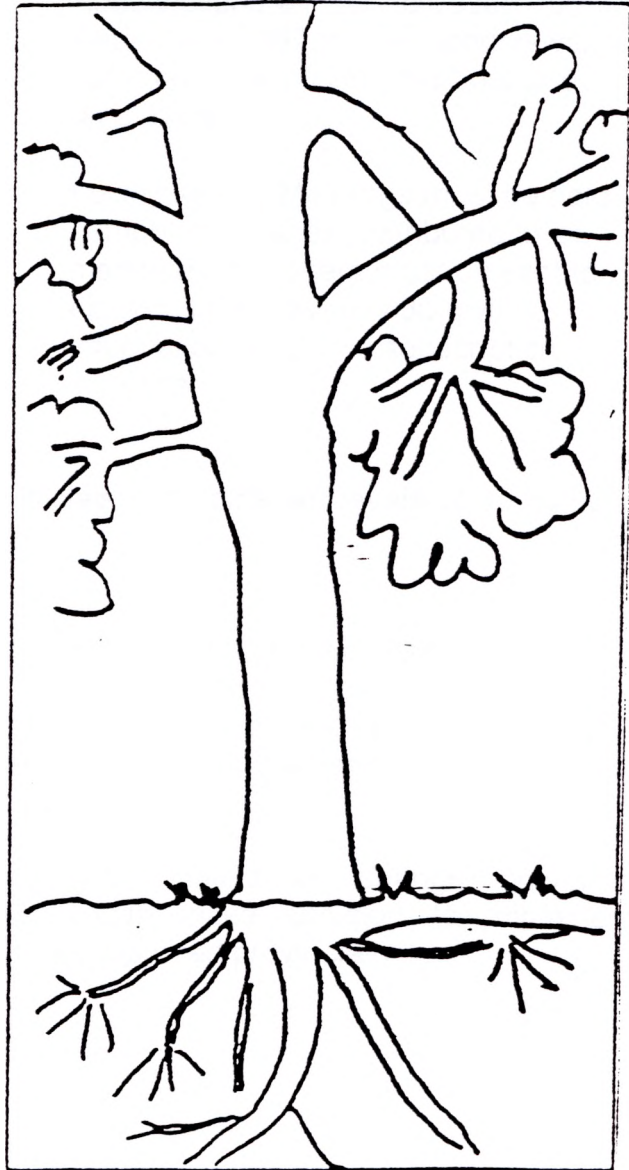
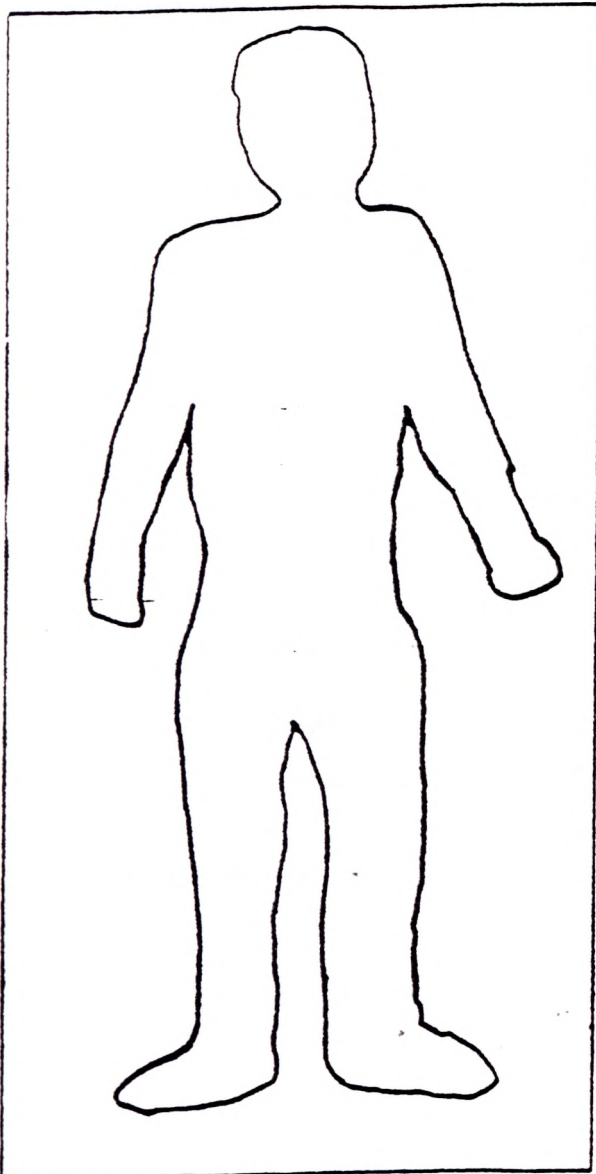


STRATEGY & STRUCTURE

- **Members** through **elected representatives (shopstewards)** make policy and set aims and specific objectives. This is done through local, regional/branch, and national representative **structures**.
- **Office bearers and Secretaries** are given the responsibility of setting up work organisation and implementation programmes. This is done through national executive, office bearers and secretariat **committees**.
- **Full time staff** are employed to perform different functions (administrative, research, legal advice, education, organising and negotiating).
- **Workers representatives/shopstewards** play an important role in the implementation of these programmes. There are various committees, starting with workplace committees, and larger representative committees (e.g. the regional/branch structures, the national bargaining committees etc).

An organisation is like a body or a tree. It has different parts. Each part has clear functions but for the body, tree or organisation to survive and grow then all the parts must work together. There are visible parts or structures but also invisible processes that make the body, tree or organisation work.

Office bearers must be aware of all the structures, functions and processes of the organisation.



In union organisation we can distinguish between **policy/decision making structures** and implementation **structures**.

There are important differences among decisions taken in unions:

Strategic Decisions

Subscriptions will be increased in 1997 to raise new funds for the union.

Administrative Decisions

Subscriptions will be increased from September 1997 to give shopstewards sufficient time inform members and employers.

Operational Decisions

Local General Meetings must be held, pamphlets must be distributed to all members and letters must be sent to each company by July 30 giving information about the subscription increase.

Different Structures and Office Bearers/Officials carry different levels of authority in the union:

Central Committee

Authority to make and change certain policies.

Provincial Committee

No authority to make or change national policy. Can make decisions to implement national policy and programmes.

Local Committee

No authority to make or change provincial decisions. Can make decision to implement programmes approved provincially.

ACTIVITY 1.4: THE MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF OFFICE BEARERS

20 minutes in groups

Now that we have taken an overview of union Work, you should be in a position to clarify your own role as Union Office Bearers.

Task:

In your groups, do the following:

- 1 List all the activities you can think of that are performed by Union Office Bearers.

- 2 Now group these activities into areas or functions which are related to one another. So, for example, *drawing up a budget, and reading financial statements* might go together under a function called *Financial Management*. Separate the management and leadership responsibilities.

We want you to end up with a list of functions which show you what the main responsibilities of office bearers are.

SECTION ONE

HANDOUT 3: ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF UNION OFFICE BEARERS

If you were to draw up a job description that could be used for Union Office Bearers generally, it would look something like this:

Key Functions	Tasks involved
<i>Strategic functions:</i>	
<i>Policy formulation:</i>	
<i>Planning:</i>	
<i>Administration:</i>	
<i>Financial Management:</i>	
<i>Staff Management:</i>	
<i>Communications and Co-ordination Management:</i>	
<i>Managing the Work (Monitoring and Evaluation):</i>	

ACTIVITY 1.5: LEADERSHIP STYLES

20 minutes in groups

When you think about the functions of an Office Bearer you will probably realise, if you have not already done so, that you are expected to be all things to all people in the Union. How should someone with so many different functions, in relation to so many different people, behave?

Task:

With your partner you are going to prepare for the vote for the new General Secretary of the Union. There are three candidates that are standing for election:

- The Coach: Jomo Sono
- The Priest: Desmond Tutu
- The General: Simphiwe Nyanda

Before casting your secret ballot you are going to discuss in detail the leadership styles of each. Focus on the style of leadership required from each rather than on the individual.

- A General in an Army:

- A Priest in a Community:

- A Coach in a Soccer Team:

After having discussed this in detail you should cast your vote on a slip of paper and hand it to the facilitator.

The facilitator will announce the outcome of the election.

Read
→

SECTION ONE

HANDOUT 4: THE ROLE OF THE OFFICE BEARER

ROLES

Strategic role – leaders

Office bearers are key leaders within the policy and strategic structures in the union. They are present in all important committees as chairpersons, secretaries etc. *They are therefore leaders in the union.*

Administrative role – managers

But office bearers are also involved in the implementation of the unions decisions. Here they have an overseeing or supervisory role over full time staff and shopstewards. Office bearers work closely with full time secretaries to ensure that the decisions are carried out. *Office bearers are therefore managers in the union.*

Operational role - activists

Office bearers also become actively involved in the implementation of decisions. They give direct support to staff and shopstewards in the actual carrying out of decisions. *They are therefore union rank and file activists.*

FUNCTIONS

If we list ~~the~~ all the activities of office bearers and group them we can see a pattern emerging in the key functions of office bearers:

Activity	Function
Thinking about the future of the organisation.	Policy Formulation
Taking positions on key administrative & organisational issues. Deciding on campaigns.	Strategic Decision-Making & Planning
Hiring and firing staff.	Staff management
Monitoring work loads and the way work is one.	Managing the work
Chairing meetings, giving report backs.	Communications and Co-ordination
Monitoring the use and recording of funds.	Finance Management

Read

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGERIAL STYLE

There are different ways in which leaders and managers go about their work. The style of a union office bearer must be consistent with the principles, goals and strategies of union organisation.

Principle:

The principle of democracy and active participation is our vision for society and we believe that this must be shown to be possible in union organisation.

Strategy:

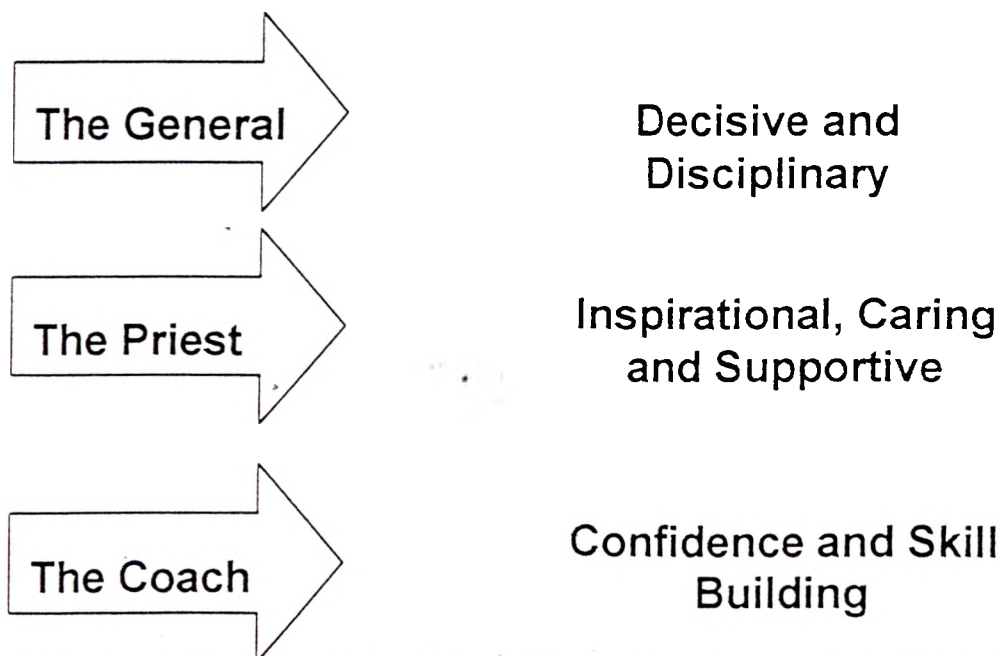
This principle is also an important part of our strategy to build powerful organisation.

Only strong powerful unions can win the struggles of workers.

Only democratic unions where members are active participants can be strong and powerful.

What style of leadership would be most likely to build a democratic and actively participative union? This is the challenge for office bearers - to create and shape this style of leadership.

We have many examples of leadership styles in our society. We must study them very carefully and draw from them if they are consistent with our principles and organisational strategy. Below we mention three styles drawn from different types of organisations:



SECTION TWO

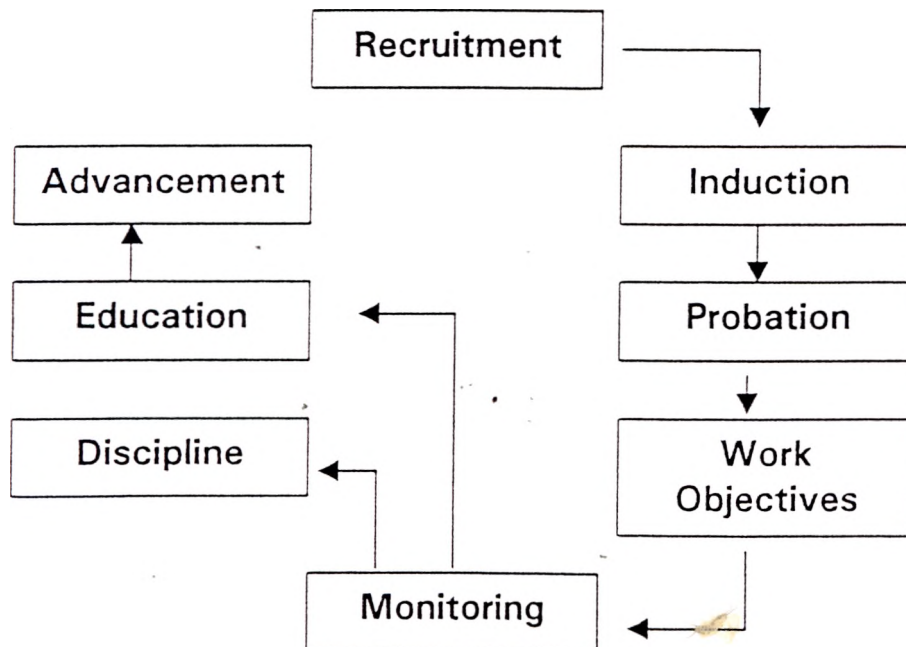
HANDOUT 1: STAFF MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK COMPLETED

Function	Activities	Who responsible?	Standard support documents
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop job description Advertise Short-list Interview Appoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary OB's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job description Union policies Selection criteria CVs
Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orientation on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Constitution - Policies - Work Areas - Office Rules - People - Discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary Senior Personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manuals Conditions of Service Work Programme
Probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set targets Evaluate skills and "fit" for union Assess potential for development Meet regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary OB's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Union appraisal documents Records of meetings
Setting work objectives and Performance Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet and plan work Agree on targets for given period Agree on standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary or OB's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work plan Records of meetings and Agreements
Review and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings to review progress Coaching & counselling to help with problems Input from other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary OB's Officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work plan Appraisal forms Records of meetings

Staff Management

Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify needs ▪ Arrange E & T ▪ Evaluate E & T 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secretary ▪ Education Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies ▪ Training manuals ▪ Records
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet to deal - rehabilitate ▪ Use disciplinary process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secretary ▪ OB's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Code of Conduct ▪ Disciplinary Procedure
Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess work progress ▪ Do career counselling ▪ Advise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secretary ▪ OB's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Records ▪ Union policies

The management of staff is more than paying wages, policing to ensure production and discipline if staff stray out of line. It is a complete system that begins with recruitment and continues with the advancement of the individual.



ACTIVITY 2.3: TYPICAL PROBLEMS OF POOR STAFF PERFORMANCE

15 minutes in pairs

We all know that there are problems with poor staff performance in our unions. As office Bearers, you probably often feel frustrated because staff do not seem to have the commitment and the skill which the union needs.

Task:

With your partner, make a list of all the different problems you have encountered in the performance of union staff.

Your facilitator will use one of these problems in showing you an analytical technique that will help you deepen your understanding of poor performance problems.

You have 15 minutes to make your list.

SECTION TWO

HANDOUT 2: PRINCIPLES FOR STAFF MANAGEMENT IN A TRADE UNION

Union staff are one of the organisation's most valuable assets. Unions usually spend close to half their budgets on employing staff. How does the union maintain and develop this important asset? Many of our experiences as workers are not very useful. The approach to the management of workers has been generally backward. Workers are not valued. Bosses treat workers as donkeys - "they will work only if we offer them carrots and when they work slowly, then the stick will speed them up".

But what is the union approach to staff management?

Key Union Principles

If we are to be consistent with our principles and the goal of the union, then we must start from our principle that all workers are essentially creative and hard working. It is the racist and exploitative system of profit that underdevelop workers. This is the understanding which we must apply to the management of union staff.

Yet we are aware of the staff problems we have: inefficiency, poor discipline, lack of creativity. How do we explain this? After the individual staff person, we must turn to the poor management in unions and the problems of the union environment for staff efficiency and creativity.

Some possible principles for a union staff management practice include:

- Respect for the individual as a creative and hard working person;
- Staff, like all workers, are more likely to work well if they are paid a fair wage and provided with decent working conditions;
- Staff are only as efficient as the work organisation and technology allow them to be;
- Staff work well if there are clear work objectives and standards of work;
- Staff must be given opportunities for on-going education and training;
- Staff discipline is encouraged where there are clear rules and codes of conduct and where discipline is meted out consistently and fairly, aimed at reforming the poor performer or person who is badly behaved;
- Where staff show commitment and hard work, they must be rewarded, particularly through advancement in their jobs and wages.