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CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND MIGRANT WORKERS

Dock workers of Durban

by

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in the University of Warwick,  
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## SUMMARY

Despite the enormous apparatus of control at the disposal of employers and the state in South Africa, working class activity has not been eliminated nor organization erased. African migrant workers, such as those employed in the Durban docks, have held a leading position within the African working class for decades, absorbing the lessons of past struggles and putting forward demands which have led strike movements. These struggles demonstrate the uncompromising hostility of African workers to their class and national oppression. With the growth of capital in South Africa an increase in class exploitation has been accompanied by intensified national oppression; the rule over African workers being enforced through vagrant, master and servant, and pass laws which reproduce a cheap migrant labour force.

Dock workers, for more than a century migrant workers, have shown a capacity for resistance in the city equal or higher than the level of class action by 'settled' urban workers. Their resilience is explained by their concentration and commanding position in the labour process of the docks. During strikes the workers have laid claim to work and residence in towns in opposition to the employer and state strategy of expelling strikers from the urban centres.

Decasualization has been introduced as a 'repressive reform' to reassert the control of the employers over an increasingly active workforce. Ironically, it has been accompanied by increasing priority to the development of contract labour in the docks and has also not eliminated the high turnover of workers nor the insecurity of employment.

The consciousness of the dock workers has been shaped by the harsh discipline of capitalist production, national oppression, and the daily experience of international communications. These factors, combined with a long tradition of resistance, have encouraged the formation of a class conscious section of the African proletariat.

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## Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ARDL	Annual Report of Department of Labour
CNLB	Central Native Labour Board
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CTSDWU	Cape Town Stevedore and Dock Workers Union
DSLSC	Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company
GFWBF	General Factory Workers Benefit Fund
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of Africa
NAD	Native Administration Department
NBBNA	Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs
OYB	Official Yearbook
RRN	Race Relations News
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SANNC	South African National Native Congress
SARH	South African Railways and Harbour
SC	Select Committee
SHWU	Seamen and Harbour Workers Union
SLU	Stevedoring Labour Unit
WBR	Wage Board Report
WCA	Workmen's Compensation Act
WD	Wage Determination
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis has been long in gestation. From being registered for a Master of Arts degree at the University of Natal, Durban, it has progressed with severe interruptions to its final form. These interruptions were those of political activity and involvement in the economic agitation here described and later in the growth of the trade union movement. The two activities, academic and organizational, were linked in a not entirely smooth way. But these links provided insights and contacts which would not otherwise have been possible by adopting a limited 'participant observation' involvement from an academic stance. A short discussion of these issues provides some introduction to the questions of methodology, participant observation, and the relationship between the research worker and the 'subjects' of research. It also provides some understanding of why such emphasis has been given to the historical evolution of the dock workers of Durban as a central group within the African working class.

The original intention of the study was a comprehensive presentation and analysis of the African labour movement up to the present time, and an outline was prepared ranging from the history of the Industrial and Commercial Union to the strikes of the 1960s. This research was an attempt both to understand the reasons why there have been such enormous upsurges or unionization followed by disastrous downswings in the long period of 1919 up to the present. Some analysis of the monstrous system of class and national oppression which has developed in the history of capital in South Africa was made in an attempt to understand the phenomenon of 'booms and slumps' in working class action and organization. Particular attention was given to the mining industry at the turn of the century to come to grips with the huge apparatus of employer, legal, and administration control exercised over African workers. Considerable time was spent in research into the 'modernization' of contract labour under British imperialism at the turn of the century and, looking forward,

research was made into the labour movement during the Second World War when, it seemed, it was possible that liberal reforms could have secured a gradual transition away from cheap forced labour. Essentially, the orientation of the study was at that time toward a critique of public administration and the gigantic system of labour channelization as being in the interests of the monopoly employers. The central focus at this stage was the growth in legislation as the basis for the exacting controls over black workers. The writer made an extensive study of the literature on African wages and in the first draft of the thesis evaluated the machinery of wage regulation. A preliminary chapter of the first draft of the thesis was published by the National Union of South African Students ('Black wages in South Africa') to provide student activists with the background material for placing demands before the Wage Board.<sup>1</sup>

This general orientation towards the African working class arose from the growing disenchantment of politically conscious intellectuals with psychologistic liberal interpretations of apartheid society. This change marked the beginning of a tendency to turn away from analyzing South African society as a 'race relations situation' with fixed caste/race characteristics maintained by a corporatist state, towards one which attempted to unravel the class factors at work in a dictatorial, though socially dynamic, regime. This deepening social awareness was closely associated with political activity which attempted to 'burst the bubble of liberalism' by exposing the exploitation of black workers by the liberal bourgeoisie. This took the form of pointing out the contradictions involved in supporting human rights while exploiting black labour, and moving on to champion opposition to poverty wages. Intellectually, this movement marked a partial resistance to the pervasive strength of bourgeois categories over social categories; of the prevalence of psychologistic and structural analysis rather than socio-economic analysis, of the study of race rather than class relations, and of an emphasis on nationalism as the only ideology of the oppressed rather than an investigation of the specific nature of class consciousness.

The general study of the history and organization of the African working class was deeply influenced by the dock strike of 1969 which heralded the revival of autonomous activity on the part of the African working class. The forward movement of the workers, the uncompromising stance adopted by the employers, and the close support for the employers given by departments of state and the police, seemed to illustrate all the essential features of the historical struggles of the African working class. Even a superficial survey of the limited amount of descriptive material on the Durban dock workers indicated a high level of resistance to employers and the state, and a tendency for these workers to provide a lead to African workers locally and nationally. The history of the dock workers proved extraordinarily rich in resistance and illustrations of the growth of the state in response to working class struggles. Certain definite advantages appeared in concentrating on a particular group of workers rather than marking a general historical sweep through all the vicissitudes of the African labour movement. The dock workers offered, uniquely, material for a history of consciousness and class action over a long period of time, insights into the dynamics of social activity by the African working class, and gave some idea of the level of self-organization of the workers. Over a long historical span, a study of the dock workers also provided a perspective from the workers' viewpoint of the organizations they were associated with: the Natal Native Congress, Industrial and Commercial Union, Communist Party of South Africa, Cape Town Stevedoring and Dock Workers' Union, Phungula's Dock Workers' Union, South African Congress of Trade Unions, and the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund. From being an example of strike action within a general study of the labour movement and African workers, increasing attention was paid to the present and past of the Durban dock workers. The notes on the origins of contract labour were recast around the dock workers as the primary material and supplemented by the general perspectives gathered on the African working class and repressive legislation.

A narrower focus also offered further data on the response of employers and the state to working class action. The evolution of the model apartheid institution, the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company, appeared to have its roots in the class struggles of an autonomous working class movement towards day labour in the 1870s. The attempts by employers to bring this independence of the workers and the rising wages which accompanied the workers' resistance under control resulted in the strengthening of an antagonistic municipal government which policed workers within barracks. While the mining industry has been the prime mover in the growth of the economy and the main advocate of contract labour and opposer of urban African family life, here appeared a group of employers who were similarly wanting the tightest control over the workers in the interests of higher levels of exploitation. These employers were also adopting the same strategy of extending their powers through the growth of the state and making full use of the police in maintaining ultimate control over labour. The history of labour and capital in the stevedoring trade in Durban seemed to provide some comparative material to the mining industry in this respect; the employers and the state arriving at similar conclusions on the need to house the workers in barracks, to develop a police force to support the employers' immediate domination over the workers, and to maintain a strict control over the supply of liquor to African workers. In this sense, as Francis Wilson who read the preliminary draft of this thesis observed, the study of dock labour in Durban was possibly as important as that of mine labour in gaining an insight into the dynamics of the contract labour system.

For the writer, however, the issue was becoming not so much the possibility of an 'autonomous path' to the super-exploitation of African workers, for which there seemed an abundance of material in the history of the state in Natal and in the stevedoring trade, but rather the development of class and national oppression in relation to the resistance of the African working class. It was not so much the particular needs of employers in labour intensive indus-

tries such as mining and stevedoring which alone were instrumental in the development of an extraordinary class and racially oppressive state but rather the violent transition of capital in South Africa towards its monopoly form. It is a paradox of apartheid society which many sociologists and even some Marxists find difficult to accept that the growth of capital has meant an intensification of national oppression because of the crises of class rule. National oppression has become more pronounced not because of a hangover from the feudal past, nor because of the ascendancy of the Boer Republic tradition, as liberals explain, but because it is integral to the system of exploitation. Contract labour is extended on a vast scale, African families are uprooted and divided, mass movements of population are taking place, in a society which is unequivocally and essentially bourgeois and one in which the rights of property are indelibly enshrined. This apparent paradox was first developed by Engels in relation to the United States where 'it is significant of the specifically bourgeois character of ... human rights that the American constitution, the first to recognize the rights of man, in the same breath confirms the slavery of the coloured races existing in America: class privileges are proscribed, race privileges sanctioned'.<sup>2</sup> As in the case of the United States, the development of capital has necessitated the most brutal exploitation of African people, their political subjugation and to an unprecedented degree the destruction of family relations by capitalism. But the very existence of these inhuman relations in South Africa is necessary to the contract labour system secured by capitalism, in which, as Marx wrote, 'all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder'.<sup>3</sup>

The writer came to this perspective both from his involvement in the working class struggles of 1972-74 and from a study of the contract labour system particularly in the docks. In the first draft there was an attempt to develop a view of the compatibility between the apartheid state and the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company, and their common antagonism to the interests of the workers. A critical position was taken, in response to the prevailing

view of liberal economists of the complete incompatibility of the interests of employers and the racial state in South Africa. The writer endeavoured to prove that the development of the company was in fact dependent on state institutions and its existence guaranteed against the opposition of the workers in the last instance by the deployment of the police to support disciplinary action by employers. At this point, it was argued, the interests of the state and employers tended to fuse in a form of state monopoly capitalism, one solid bloc against the workers. But in fact the interests of even a company of the importance of the DSLSC and the state were never completely identical and this point is developed in the chapter on mass strikes. The division of labour between the employers and the state in the labour process has taken the form of the 'front line' of discipline over the workers being maintained by the employers with the police as a weapon of secondary resort.

These perspectives on the nature of power in bourgeois society influenced the methodology adopted. The writer anticipated that information from the state and employers would be blocked as the study developed and so the first approaches were made for permission to have access to the State Archives in Pretoria and interviews were initiated with management. The Department of Labour files included invaluable material on the struggles of dock workers during the Second World War, in particular full transcriptions of the arguments made by Zulu Phungula during negotiations with the employers and departments of state. While use was being made of these files with the permission of the Minister of National Education, a senior Department of Labour official objected to my having access, and permission to consult the files was immediately withdrawn. At the same time the writer had a series of interviews with W.S. Dreyer, manager of the DSLSC, which were very productive in gaining insight into the labour process and data on employment and wages. The wage record cards of the workers for the period up to 1969 were made available to the writer and representative samples were made from these cards to assess length of contract and average wages. From these sources a first draft was

written making full use of historical data from the 1870s, interviews with .W.S. Dreyer, and information from the record cards.

By 1971 the writer came to be involved in the Wages Commission, which produced pamphlets directed to the workers, and Isisebenzi, the workers' newspaper. From this point contacts were made with the stevedoring workers independently of the DSLSC management. With the enormous growth of the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund (GFWBF) in 1972-73, the writer came in regular contact with the stevedoring workers and was assigned the task of developing the members of the GFWBF employed by stevedoring companies into an organized section of the fund. The discussions and organized meetings held with the workers over the period up to January 1974 enabled the writer to make an assessment of the information gained from historical documents and the data from management. Selected data is drawn from the minutes of these meetings.

Lengthy though this thesis is, a large amount of the data which had been collected is not presented here due to the problems of length. One of the most serious omissions which has had to be made is on accidents in the docks and cases of the workers' response to accidents as instances of the employers' neglect of the interests and safety of the workers as well as the inefficient operation of the Workmen's Compensation Act. A large amount of data on the impoverishment and growth of commodity relations in the countryside of Natal during the nineteenth century has also had to be omitted. One of the most unfortunate and unavoidable omissions has been the comments and responses of the workers themselves to the conclusions of the writer. The thesis has benefited considerably, however, from the comments and criticisms of participants in the Institute of Commonwealth Studies seminars at which a preliminary chapter, 'Dock workers, labour circulation, and class struggles in Durban, 1940-59', was presented.<sup>4</sup>

### Notes to Introduction

1. David Hemson (1971): *Black wages in South Africa*, Roneoed.
2. Frederick Engels (1975): Anti-Duhring, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p.127.
3. Marx and Engels (1973): Selected Works, Communist Manifesto, p.50.
4. This paper was eventually rewritten and published in the Journal of Southern African Studies, October 1977, 4(1): 88-124.

## CHAPTER 1

### TOGT LABOUR AND THE COLONIAL ECONOMY

The state is 'an organization of the exploiting class... for the forcible holding down of the exploited class in the conditions of oppression (slavery, villeinage or serfdom, wage labour) determined by the existing mode of production.'

Engels, Anti-Duhring

Togt labour 'creates in the midst of plenty unnecessary uncertainty in the supply of daily labour, except at exorbitant wages; and it forces, in spite of themselves, those householders who engage monthly servants to feed at night the jobbing idlers whose unreasonable demands or disinclination prevented their employment during the day. It discourages orderly and regular monthly service, because it exhibits to natives so employed comparatively large monthly gains, coupled with an attractive but unwholesom liberty...'

Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs, 1873.

The subjection of the African working class to a regime of national oppression and super-exploitation, and the racial divisions in the South African working class, have been the result of a long historical process which has been neither predetermined nor independent of the growth of capital on a world scale. Originally South Africa existed only as a geographical region within British imperialism, and it was only quite slowly that a local bourgeoisie developed to demand national boundaries and a state under its immediate control. In Natal, as elsewhere in Southern Africa, the brutal domination of British imperialism over the indigenous population was closely related to the growth of productive relations in agriculture, mining, and small-scale industry. The formation of a working class in the region was directly related to the penetration of commodity relations into tribal communities. This unrelenting process (the growth of trade, substitution of commodities for African utensils, and the death of African handicrafts) was accelerated by wars of conquest which resulted in British imperialism securing the land mass and establishing general political domination over the area. The power of the British state was employed to speed, in a hothouse fashion, the integration of the region on the basis of capitalist production closely interwoven with the world economy. But the establishment of uniform relations of domination and exploitation did not proceed in a unilinear manner, and the final outcome at certain moments could have taken a number of turns. The imposition of

new relations of political and economic domination and transformation of traditional societies was by no means even, in some instances meeting with the most unrelenting resistance. In other areas British imperialism was seen by the traditional leaders as a defence against even more rapacious attacks on African-occupied land. During the period of traditional resistance to British imperialism, however, the formation of an African working class continued apace.

The dominant complaint of the bourgeoisie during the period of the colonial economy was that of shortage of labour. As imperialism became increasingly associated with the export of capital rather than articles of consumption, the supply of capital was not the main constraint on the development of production. The plantation economy in Natal, mining in the Northern Cape and later in the Transvaal, and infrastructural development were based on an ever-expanding demand for African labour. After the abolition of slavery in the British empire and in South Africa in 1834, labour supplies had to be sought in other colonies and increasingly in the existing African communities which maintained some form of political independence. With the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886, the channeling of African labour throughout the Southern African region to the farms, plantations, mines, and towns, took on an increasingly planned form. As a regional labour market developed with workers attracted to the plantation, mining, and urban centres, capital searched increasingly in the remote areas and even throughout eastern Africa and India for fresh supplies of cheap labour. Particularly in Natal, select

committees of the colonial legislature were established to investigate new sources of labour supply from India, Portuguese East Africa, and even further north. Because African people still had some access to subsistence agriculture and, as importantly, to a communal system of land tenure and homestead kinship networks, the labour supply fluctuated considerably from agricultural season to season.

The dream of capitalists in the colonies to have long term contract labour at the lowest wages was fulfilled only in respect of Indian indentured workers; African labour tended towards shorter contracts and higher wages. Having only partially entered the sphere of commodity relations (even though burdened by the need to earn cash for taxes) and able to fall back on some element of subsistence agriculture, African workers were 'undisciplined' wage labourers. The colonial administrators and capitalists looked longingly at the sharp contrast of discipline in tribal organization, in societies in which wage slavery was despised. The general tendency of capital on a world scale to expropriate producers on the land and force them to submit to the discipline of hunger was powerfully reinforced by wars, an oppressive state, and regulations such as those which compelled Africans to wear manufactured clothes. As capitalist production expanded, the colonial state acted to 'force-ripen' productive relations by transforming the relations of domination. Proletarianization was speeded up

to the pace of the enclosure movement in Britain without the rural ties of the workers being completely eliminated. This contradictory development was to have decisive implications for the development of segregation and national oppression of African workers.

In approaching the problems of an undisciplined labour force and uncertain labour supplies the bourgeoisie did not make inventions in new forms of control over a fresh working class, but employed measures to hand which were available from the development of early capitalism: in particular vagrancy and master and servants laws. On these familiar foundations increasingly coercive laws were enacted as the forces of production matured. This stream of legislation and its racial form indicated the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to make reforms corresponding to the expansion of production and certainty of capitalist development in the colonial areas which made up South Africa. With few exceptions, the transition of capitalism in South Africa from the period of free competition when merchant interests were dominant to the era of deep level mining, roughly from 1870 to the turn of the century, was marked by an increase in national oppression, wars of conquest, land confiscation, enforced participation in commodity relations, and forced labour. The dawn of this period was conveyed in correspondence:

It seems impossible for a body of white men to live in proximity to the colored races, without adopting a conviction that, as the dominant people, they have a right to command the services of the less civilized: that despite the habits, and the wants of the Native, his only position is that of a laborer ministering to the requirements of the white colonist; and that, if he does not naturally, or from circumstances, fall into this subordinate position, it is just and proper, by coercive enactments, to force him into a more servile condition.<sup>1</sup>

State intervention from this early period was unashamedly concentrated on inducing a larger supply of labour and cheapening labour power. These aims were not, however, secured by legislation alone, but through military domination combined with the subordination of African producers to the world market. The transformation of colonial society did not emerge evenly, but was marked by crises within imperialism which tended to increase abrupt advances in aggressive domination and the legislation of control.

### The emergence of togt labour

One of the most interesting, although not necessarily the most significant, contradiction which emerged within the colonial economy was that between the growth of day labour and the general interests of the colonial employers on the longest possible contracts of employment. The issue serves as an introduction to the most important section of the African working class in Natal, the dock workers, and provides some indication of the forms of action taken by African workers before and after the decisive wars of conquest. It also provides insight into the evolution of the colonial state as an instrument of class domination.

Although day labour under capitalism has generally involved severe disadvantages to workers (as is shown in the long struggle by dock workers' unions for decasualization), it is argued here that during the early phase of proletarianization, day labour was taken up in Natal by African workers to force up wages and escape the draconian masters and servants regulations. During a period of upturn in the colonial economy, the disadvantages to workers in terms of uncertain employment were tempered by the greater freedom of action in the towns which day labour gave so long as there was a viable subsistence economy. During the early 1870s increasing numbers of African workers in the towns of Natal, and particularly Durban, refused to enter into monthly contracts with employers and forced an increase in wages through working daily. This apparently minor adjustment

of contractual relations between workers and employers set in motion a series of reactions within the ruling class which intensified the control over African workers as a whole, laid the grounds for housing African workers in barracks, and provided new sources of revenue for an expanding and increasingly repressive state. The response to the rise in day labour marked a significant difference in the strategy of the bourgeoisie in the colonies and metropole in relation to the working class.<sup>2</sup> While in Britain Parliament removed criminal sanctions from master and servant legislation in 1867 and legalized trade unions in 1875 under pressure from organized workers, in Southern Africa the massive expansion in the forces of production particularly in mining led in an opposite direction for the mass of the working class.<sup>3</sup>

The insistence by African workers on working daily contracts not only in the docks (where a mixture of daily paid and contract labour seems to have been employed) but in other sectors went against the whole current of regulations over employment. The fundamental law controlling workers, the master and servants Ordinance, No.2 of 1850, did not provide for day labour. In Natal, where slavery had not been practiced and where wage labour did not have the characteristics of regularity and submission, the state dictated the terms of contract 'freely' entered into by workers and employers. The Ordinance was thoroughly repressive in relation to the formative working class, but also an essentially bourgeois measure. It marked an advance beyond slavery in that it limited indefinite contract, and attacked patriarchal relations by insisting on wage (cash) labour, and limiting the apprenticeship of children. These

the sugar plantations, white households, and public works. Although this resistance was thought possible to overcome through importing indentured labour, the problems of property owners became more acute with the expansion of production. Even the importation of about 5,000 indentured Indian labourers to Natal between 1860 and 1866, which primed the sugar plantations, did not satisfy the total demands for labour.<sup>7</sup> An extraordinarily international proletariat laboured for Natal employers in an effort to overcome the ability of indigenous producers to resist the harsh discipline of wage labour. Of some 20,000 African workers employed in the colony in the early 1970s almost 6,000 were foreign workers who had migrated long distances to seek employment in Natal.<sup>8</sup> The Lieutenant Governor argued that the importation of Indian labourers and other long-term contract labourers was 'not to cheapen labor, but to render it more continuous and reliable.'<sup>9</sup> But with the expansion of the economy in the 1870s and no further large-scale importation of Indian labourers between 1866 and 1874, the political representatives of local capitalists and plantation owners became almost obsessively concerned with labour supply and better means of disciplining local African workers.

What evidence there is to hand provides some indication of the lack of discipline employers were able to command over a fresh proletariat in Natal. Under the harsh conditions of employment and low wages it is not surprising that African workers did not want to be employed for long periods and could not be depended upon by local employers. In the early 1850s

advances were essential to the widening of commodity relations and the creation of a market for labour, both essential to the expansion of capitalism on a world scale. The class nature of the law was most evident in the controls it provided over workers. Employers could deduct or withhold proportions of the wages of the workers,<sup>4</sup> did not have to allow the family of the worker to live on the premises,<sup>5</sup> and were strengthened by a wide definition of illegal acts by workers. The workers' 'crimes' were the following: refusing or neglecting work, doing work negligently or improperly, causing damage to the employer's property, behaving violently or insolently to the employer, committing 'scandalous immorality', being drunk, deserting, or any 'other gross misconduct'.<sup>6</sup> The punishments provided for in the law were harsh; imprisonment up to one month with or without hard labour and spare diet, whipping up to twelve lashes, or a fine of up to five pounds. The wide scope of the offences and these drastic penalties enforced the penal servitude of the worker to the employer and made strikes or any acts of non-co-operation by workers illegal. The definition of servant included 'a boatman, porter, or other occupation of a like nature', and it was against this labour regime with its minimal wages that the togt workers were rebelling.

The togt labour phenomenon which took shape in the early 1970s was only one aspect of the resistance of African workers to their subordination to employers and a repressive colonial regime which was manifest in the labour shortages encountered by

Russell, who worked for a commercial firm, reported that African workers insisted on changing the hours for meal times and had arguments with the company which led frequently to strikes.<sup>10</sup> The wife of a farmer reported in 1854 that the farm workers struck in demanding mealies during a time of fast rising prices.<sup>11</sup> In the towns the master-servant relationships prescribed by law took time to take the form intended. African male workers refused to take wage labour too seriously and were accused of 'excessive gallantry' when African women came into the towns. They would leave off work to banter with the young women.<sup>12</sup> Faced with such undiscipline employers demanded close enforcement of the laws of subordination. An English worker employed as overseer of a work gang in Durban in the 1860s recorded the increasing violence used against African workers to intensify their labour.

A. H. Jones, the overseer who had not shed his working class loyalty in the colony, mentions in his diary numerous disputes between the African workers and the employers. He sided with the workers in a dispute for not being paid overtime in April 1864. When the African workers struck against being served with bad mealies they were taken before the magistrate and sentenced to twelve lashes. Three days after the lashing little work was possible as the workers' backs were slashed, 'every blow of the cats having cut the skin'. There were frequent arguments between the foreman and workers over food and other issues, and in August 1864 one worker was flogged for hitting the foreman and

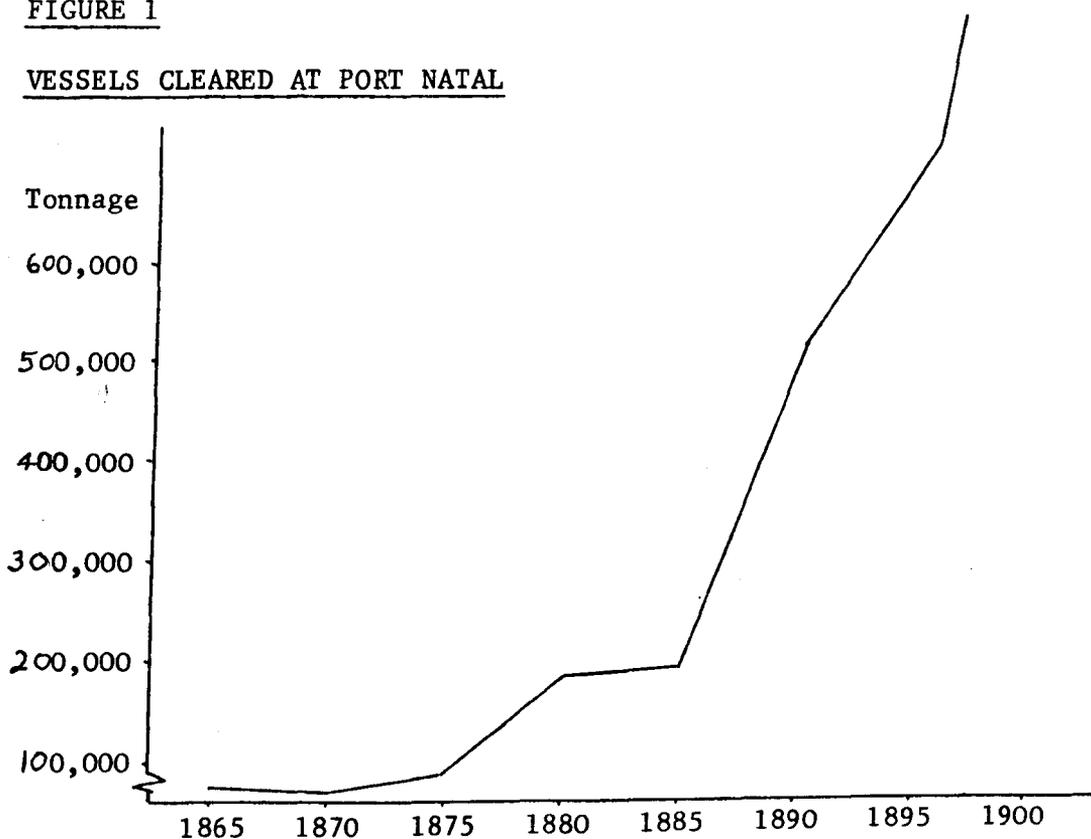
another for giving 'cheek'.<sup>13</sup> While these conditions were reportedly typical in the plantations and agriculture generally, the increasingly oppressive labour contracts in the towns marked an increase in the rate of exploitation. Not unexpectedly, when an increase in trade provided workers with the opportunity, togt labour became a means of escaping such rigid control.

The first reported movement of African workers into togt labour was in 1865 when the town council petitioned the Secretary for Native Affairs to control the expansion of this form of labour. Apparently togt workers were living off the rations given to the monthly servants with whom they were on good relations, and the town council had demanded executive action against 'idly disposed natives under the pretence of looking for day labor' being on the premises of householders. The Secretary for Native Affairs replied that the authority to take action remained with the town council and that restrictions on African workers in the towns could impede labour supply.<sup>14</sup> This deflection of appeals for control was followed by suggestions in 1868 by a committee of the town council that all servants should be registered and should carry passes. The contract of employment should be entered in the pass and a village planned for African workers, it was recommended.<sup>15</sup> In the following year a vagrant law was promulgated which made it an offence for 'colored' people to be out after 2100.<sup>16</sup>

By the early 1870s there was a tremendous increase in shipping and a corresponding increase in the demand for African dockers. The tonnage of vessels cleared in 1874 was almost double that for 1870 and in the following years increased rapidly. While the world economy entered a long period (1873-96) of depression marked by falling prices, in South Africa there was some expansion in the production of raw materials, a spectacular increase in the production of diamonds and gold, and an overall increase in trade. All these developments placed exceptional pressure on harbour facilities in Durban and demanded increased capital expenditure and more labour.

FIGURE 1

VESSELS CLEARED AT PORT NATAL



As the number of ships cleared rose from 81 in 1870 to 161 in 1873, the employment of African workers in Durban borough increased from 1,777 in 1871 to 2,297 in 1873, to meet the demand for stevedores, servants, wagon drivers, and shop workers. Between 1870 and 1876 wages of African workers moved persistently upwards as higher wages were demanded in conditions of fuller employment.

TABLE 1.1

AVERAGE WAGE OF MONTHLY EMPLOYED AFRICAN  
WORKER AND COST OF FOOD, DURBAN 1870-1878

	Monthly worker with rations (shillings)	Muid of ground maize (shillings)
1870	8s	6s
1871	10s	12s
1872	12s	26s
1873	15s	18s
1874	16s	20s
1875	23s 4d	15s 9d
1876	25s	12s 4d
1877	16s	21s
1878	20s	32s

Source: Natal Blue Books, X17 and X9

As the monthly employed African workers were provided with rations the sometimes abrupt increases in the price of ground maize did not affect them directly, but for the daily paid workers rising food prices considerably worsened their position.

But the general conditions for the working class in Natal improved with the expansion of trade and the acute labour shortage which resulted. The Natal Almanac reported in 1873 that 'every employer is asking for a larger supply of servants to enable him to give employment to his increased capital...the demand for labourers which has been made even by the more enterprising Kafirs and coolies in the colony, proves that trade generally has increased, and that there is no lack of means to carry it on.'<sup>17</sup> Migrant workers were also in a better bargaining position because of a good crop of maize in 1873 which followed a strong drought in 1872. These changes in the colonial political economy encouraged togt labour to spread from the docks to other areas of employment.

The expansion of togt labour outside the strict controls of the master and servants regulations and also to command higher wages precipitated a drastic response from the ruling class which attacked independent wage labour and intensified national oppression of African workers. In a measure which had subsequently been described as an important forerunner of the urban aspects of apartheid, employers and the state acted to blunt the forward movement of the African working class, to tax togt labourers, and move towards a 'city police state'. Segregation of African workers in barracks, constant police control, and a further extension of the 'crimes' of African workers, arose not from struggles over the land (some of the most decisive wars of conquest were to occur later) but from the growing tendency towards monopoly capital. But the developments in Durban were

significant in partly preceding the direct control over African workers achieved by the great monopoly companies in mining; compound labour, passes, taxes, and police control. The evolution of the model and 'modern' system of class and national oppression in Durban did not, however, follow a unilinear path, and had to overcome prolonged resistance from the workers.

By 1873 some 300 out of 2,297 African workers employed in Durban had taken up togt labour. This was hardly a large proportion of the total work force, but the reaction of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Shepstone, was swift and decisive. The growth of togt labour he declared had resulted in a demand for wages 'far in excess of the highest rate paid to monthly servants, while, with few exceptions, the skill and value of the labour so highly paid for are less'. The racial measures which followed were thus entirely bound up with the activity of the capitalist state in cheapening labour. The togt workers were a dangerous class of labourers, he argued, who had no fixed place of residence and could move about freely, all of which caused insecurity in the towns.

(Togt labour) creates in the midst of plenty unnecessary uncertainty in the supply of daily labour, except at exorbitant wages; and it forces, in spite of themselves, those householders who engage monthly servants to feed at night the jobbing idlers whose unreasonable demands or disinclination prevented their employment during the day.

Shepstone was arguing that the togt workers were being subsidized by the householders. They were able to command a higher wage rate without rations, and then live off their comrades' rations

in the backyards of the householders. In this way the workers were able to reduce the costs of their reproduction to a minimum while pushing wage rates upwards. He followed this analysis with a sweeping and violent denunciation of togt labour which threatened to swamp the towns with an undisciplined reserve army of labour.

It discourages orderly and regular monthly service, because it exhibits to natives so employed comparatively large monthly gains, coupled with an attractive but unwholesome liberty. It destroys or fails to create any feeling of mutual interest between master and servant, and threatens, if not checked, soon to reach the full development to which it naturally tends, namely, a large but fluctuating native population living in the towns, but having no home in them, subject to no restraint except that of their own convenience, combining to enrich themselves at the expense of the householders by excessive demands, or by directly dishonest means... Then, again, the only excuse for these men living in the towns at all is the service of the householders. They come and go when they please; no official notice is taken of their presence; no one knows where they come from, where they go to, or to whom they belong; they feel no restraint; are subject to none of the checks which their homes supply, and suddenly find themselves in the midst of temptations to evils without the deterring influence of any control or supervision. Such a condition must produce demoralisation, lead to drunkenness, and tempt to every form of crime.<sup>18</sup>

In the struggle to reduce African wages, Shepstone advanced a central tenet of the ruling class in South Africa: that African workers were not entitled to be in the industrial centres except for the period of wage employment. The extravagant language he adopted and his championing of the interests of householders were possibly an attempt to win full agreement for the strict regulations which were proclaimed to discipline the togt workers.

His remarks showed how far the bourgeoisie in the colony was from an ideology of competitive capitalism and the free play of market forces. Capitalism in Southern Africa required the nurturing of an interventionist state; one whose primary task was the disciplining of African workers. What was advanced was a rigidly controlled labour market with the employers considerably strengthened by the local state. In their essence, the regulations provided the framework for channeling and cheapening African labour which has persisted to the present. All Africans, apart from property owners, were required to register as togt workers or enter monthly contracts within five days of entering the towns. Every togt worker was provided with a badge carrying in large figures his registration number which had to be conspicuously displayed. If offered work at the minimum rates of daily wages laid down by the magistrate, the togt labourer was bound to work. The togt workers were required to pay registration fees of 2s 6d monthly; equivalent to two and a half days unpaid labour for the local state each month, as the rate of wages was initially set at 1s a day. The penalties approached those stipulated by the masters and servants law. For a first contravention of the regulations a togt worker could be fined up to 20s or imprisoned with hard labour up to a month. But for subsequent offences imprisonment was even longer than provided for under the masters and servants law: three months hard labour. Any offenders could be prohibited from working as a togt labourer and banished from town.<sup>19</sup>

The tax squeezed from the togt workers went directly on the 'cost of supervision, pay, maintenance, and clothing of the

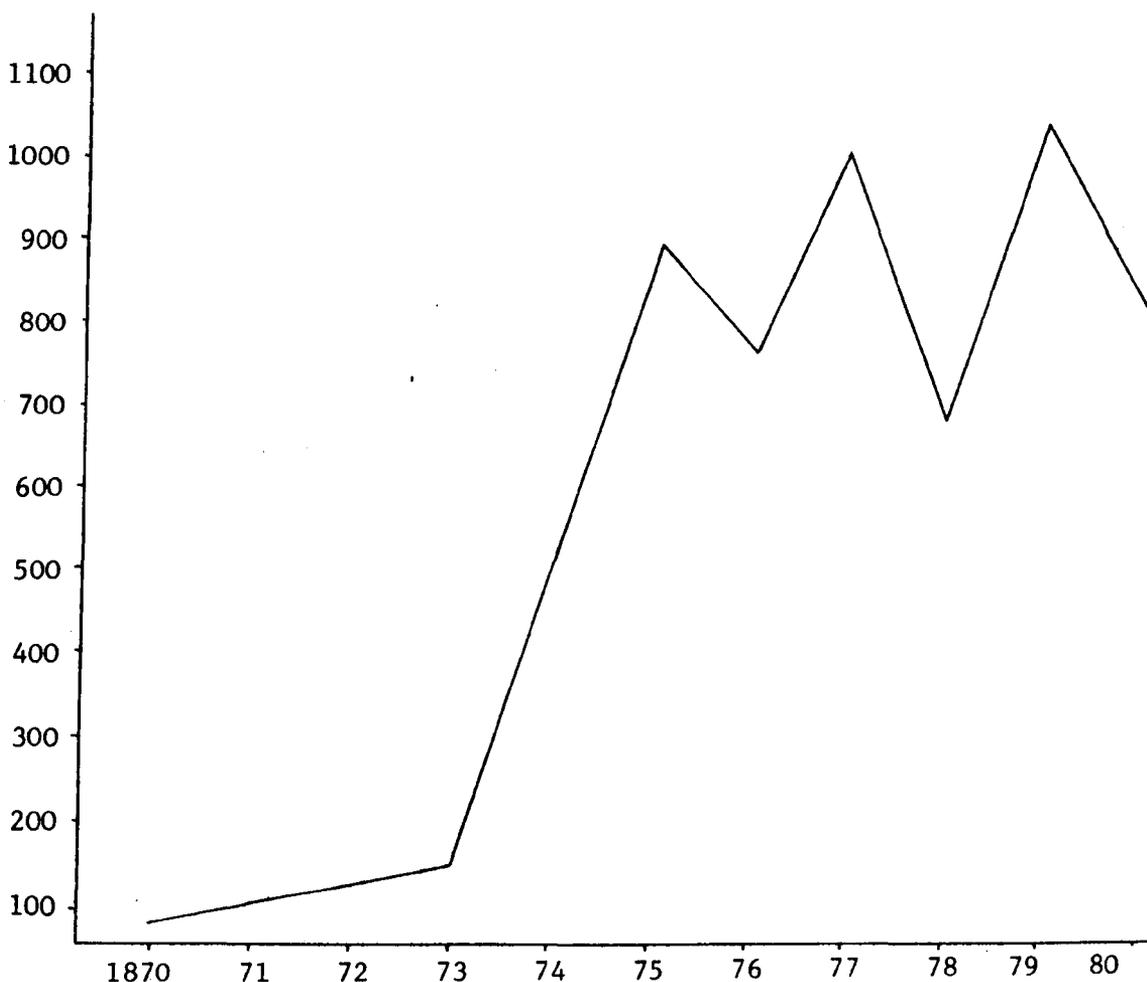
necessary additional police' needed to enforce the regulations. Shepstone instructed the municipalities to employ at least ten additional African policemen and a white constable to control the togt workers.<sup>20</sup> In this way the workers were compelled to pay for the specialized detachments of the state acting to force them into a more subordinate and exploitable position.

The togt labour regulations were, however, only one element in the bourgeois attack on African workers as a whole in the towns. The vagrant law of 1869 which had not been properly enforced was put into effect with the building of a 'substantial house' to accommodate those arrested under the law. A curfew was introduced after 2100 and all 'colored' people had to provide a good account of themselves after this time and to return to their rooms.<sup>21</sup> The rising income of the togt account (the municipality had £130 6s 10d in credit by the end of 1874 even after employing ten African constables and a white sergeant) ensured that the collective disciplining of African workers would not have to be paid for by increases in the rates. A tremendous increase in prosecutions of African workers by the reinforced police force followed the togt regulations and implementation of the vagrant law. There were increases in prosecutions between 1873-74 in terms of the master and servants law (from 142 to 197), vagrant law (5 to 261) and togt regulations (0 to 72). This sharp increase in the coercion of the local state through the police against African workers established their routine application of the new laws and marked a general trend

towards an increase in arbitrary arrest and prosecution.

FIGURE 1.2

PROSECUTIONS IN TERMS OF 'LABOUR REPRESSIVE' LEGISLATION



Source: Mayor's Minutes for respective years

The year following the outbreak of an international capitalist crisis, 1874, was the turning point in the application of new laws and police force against African workers. While in 1871 some 5 per cent of the African working population was prosecuted in terms of labour repressive legislation, by 1877 this had risen dramatically to 32 per cent. In Durban, as in the other major centres of concentration of capital, coercion

and exploitation was ripening into the systematic form of national oppression characteristic of the 'modern' period. The full weight of the state was falling on the African workers not in defence of an agrarian patriarchal order but in disciplining the workers to overcome a crisis in capitalist relations.

### Resistance and development of the barracks

The high level of prosecutions and state action against African workers indicated the persistent resistance to the more intense exploitation of African workers. This took the form of spontaneous action to demand increased wages, to dodge compliance with regulations, and most concretely to avoid being housed and controlled in compounds. The history of togt labour from the inception of the togt regulations to the turn of the century was one of growing determination by employers and the municipality to squeeze the togt workers into the compounds, and an equal determination by these workers to defy, wriggle out, or look for alternative forms of housing in the town. Their main refuge was in the backyards of employers of monthly servants where the rations of these workers could be shared. But the municipality also took action against shacks built by workers in the dock area in an attack on all forms of alternative housing to the compounds.

Although the togt regulations had given the municipality 'great satisfaction' in its first year of operation they were

resisted by the workers. Although it was reported that the number of togt workers registered in terms of the regulations had risen to 550 by July 1874, by the end of the year the Natal Chamber of Commerce was complaining that many of the togt workers had left the town and had caused a shortage of labour. The resistance to the new measures had forced wages up to 'a comparatively high figure', and employers had asked the Resident Magistrate to fix a maximum wage for togt labour. This was not possible in terms of the togt regulations which provided only for the prescribing of minimum wage rates to make possible the compulsion to labour. Theoretically it would otherwise have been possible for employers to force togt workers to work for wages which were well below the average wages paid. This could have caused the state to have become over-extended in exerting a direct compulsion to labour, and the minimum wage rates allowed some conception of 'fairness' in daily wage contracts to remain, while at the same time drastically increasing police powers. The magistrate informed the Chamber that only minimum wage rates could be fixed and these were set at 1s 6d a day or 3d an hour.<sup>22</sup> Despite the employers' offensive and the concentrated use of the state powers against the togt workers, wages had not been significantly reduced below those of labourers in the United Kingdom. Through their resistance the togt workers had secured a wage which was at least equal to that for casual dock labour in London in the same period (wages of London dock workers were only 4 or 5d per hour in 1889) and a persistent complaint of the employers

was that African workers' wages were almost equal to that in the metropolitan centre.<sup>23</sup>

The minimum wage laid down by the Resident Magistrate was opposed by the togt workers who demanded an (unspecified) increase in March 1875. The Town Council turned down their demand and increasingly used the togt regulations as a means of general control over the movement of all African workers.<sup>24</sup> The upward trend in prosecutions provides a superficial indication of the deep underlying resistance of the African workers as a whole to the more intensive exploitation made possible by an increasingly larger and more oppressive state. In response to the crisis within world capitalism and to the resistance of the indigenous people in Southern Africa, the British state became increasingly involved in politically dominating the region and quickening the transformation of relations of domination into productive relations. In what became later described as the wars of conquest, British and colonial troops became involved in attacks on the independent African peoples and Afrikaner republics. Imperialist domination over all indigenous Southern African peoples prepared the way for the forcible integration of the region on a capitalist basis, a common infrastructure, and a widened market. These wars were not conducted simply for the purpose of uniform political domination alone under a rapacious British policy.

As Bukharin has argued:

War serves to reproduce definite relations of production. War of conquest serves to reproduce those relations on a wider scale. Simply to define war, however, as conquest is entirely insufficient, for the simple reason that in doing so we fail to indicate the main thing, namely, what production relations are strengthened or extended by the war, what basis is widened by a given 'policy of conquest'.<sup>26</sup>

The attacks against the Zulu in 1879 were, for example, in the words of the British High Commissioner, frankly conducted to turn the Zulu 'man-slaying human military machine' into a 'useful class of native labourers'. An aggressive imperialist policy was thus closely linked to the perennial shortage of labour and the challenge posed to the relations of exploitation and domination by the resistance of African workers in the towns.

There were distinct connections between resistance in the countryside and in the towns. One of the reasons for the sudden labour shortage and the upward pressure on wages after the promulgation of the toggt regulations was the attack on the Hlubi by colonial troops in 1873. The warriors who put up a spirited resistance to British troops were no strangers to wage labour and had been the largest single group of workers in the colonial capital, Pietermaritzburg.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, even after the Zulu army had been decisively beaten at Ulundi on 4 July there is evidence that the 'useful class of native labourers' was prepared to adopt new methods of struggle in the towns. With congested port facilities, rising war inflation, and immense transport problems, the employers

and the state were vulnerable to mass walkouts from Durban. African workers co-ordinated their efforts to force wages up and resist state action. During the early days of October 1879 the Superintendent of Police in Durban reported that about 100 workers had left the borough for their kraals in protest against retaliation for making wage demands. 'They are becoming very dissatisfied and independent; in some cases where one has been fired for refusing to work at the price laid down in the togt laws, numbers have at once thrown up their badges.'<sup>29</sup> Although the workers' resistance did not take the form of an all out strike, the mass walkouts and confrontations with employers formed part of a prolonged struggle which created turbulence in the labour market. The problems faced by employers were worsened by the unsettled conditions in Zululand which resulted in the migration route from Mozambique to the south being shut off. The Police Superintendent reported that no batches of Amatonga had entered the colony since September the previous year and that there seemed to be no free passage through Zululand. Only 50 to 60 Zulu labourers had entered the borough and every firm was short handed, some paying 3s and providing rations to togt workers.<sup>30</sup> The resistance waged by the togt workers over the period, even with the devastating defeats in the countryside, had enabled wages to be doubled in five years.

The persistent antagonism of African workers to the machinery of control only increased the determination of the ruling class to strengthen the police and subject the workers to the discipline of barrack life. Five additional African policemen and a white constable taken on early in 1877 brought the total police force overseeing togt workers to 17, providing a policeman for every 47 togt workers. Further additions to the togt police force would be made in the future. But the primary emphasis of state policy was to squeeze the togt workers into barracks. A large building was completed in 1878 with funds from the swelling togt account with accommodation for 'a large number of men' and light, cooking utensils, and a storeroom. In addition to these inducements no rent was charged. The Resident Magistrate called a meeting of togt workers in the town to explain the purpose of the barracks and the Mayor appealed to the white householders to prohibit togt workers from sleeping on their premises at night. Despite this strategy the 800 togt workers were highly resistant to moving into the barracks.<sup>30</sup>

The process of municipal controls over African workers continued relentlessly. In 1881 an attempt was made to bring monthly servants under a similar code of rules as the togt workers by establishing the identity of all African workers: their names, tribes and kraals. The pass system was tightened in the following years to give effect to the Vagrant Law, and the mayor <sup>again</sup> appealed to property owners not to give African

workers imprecise passes which would make the law ineffective.<sup>31</sup> When the Resident Magistrate gave a judgement which weakened the arbitrary powers of the police in terms of the Vagrant Law, the Superintendent confessed that the passes were an invention of the police, but argued they were essential. 'As the pass, however, is the only means the police have of testing the truthfulness of a native's assertion that he is on lawful business, the Vagrant Law without such a pass becomes a dead letter, and the result can be easily imagined.'<sup>32</sup>

The strategy of the ruling class was centred on rooting out the togt workers from the backyards of the householders and destroying all independent shacks in the dock area in the drive to force all togt workers into the barracks. This strategy was closely related to that of forcing the wages of togt workers downwards. The municipal records abound with complaints about the high wages and shorter hours of the togt workers in comparison to the monthly workers. Togt labour was considered 'demoralising' by the Superintendent of Police in 1890 because he considered the workers needed little more than food, a few old clothes, and about 2s to pay for hut tax. He argued that the consumption of workers should be limited and wages reduced to increase their labour time. 'What the "jobber" receives is about 2s 6d per diem and food for 8 hours work, and having no legitimate use for all these wages, spends half of his time in idleness, and very naturally other Kafirs wish to do the same, and refuse to enter into monthly service.' He suggested that the wages for African labourers

should be reduced to 1s a day with food.<sup>33</sup> His proposal was 'out of season' during the boom in imports 1886 to 1893 which strengthened the position of the togt workers. At this time the mayor considered that the togt workers had become 'almost uncontrolled' and able to command high wages. Councillor Nicol, who was connected with the stevedoring trade, was asked to produce a report in 1891 on counter measures to the togt workers independence. The aim of the local property owners was to force the workers into barracks. As the mayor argued in 1891, the 'concentration of a part of the floating population will not only bring them under more complete and salutary police and sanitary control', but would also prevent 'sponging' upon domestic servants.<sup>34</sup> The attack on togt workers drawing on the rations of monthly servants was not simply a determination to defend the colonial domestic economy from parasites, but also to reduce the togt workers' capacity to resist the downward pressure on wages exerted by employers. When the flood of imports began to recede in 1893 the employers were able to reduce the wages of African and Indian workers as the concentrated power of the state was brought to bear against the workers.<sup>35</sup>

The pressure on workers outside the compounds and backyards was also increased by municipal policy towards shacks occupied by workers in the dock area. In 1891, the same year in which attacks were made on togt workers in the backyards of householders, the Water Police reported the old shanties in the Point area had been demolished and that new buildings were

being erected. There had been an increase in population in the Bamboo Square locality in the Point but the residents had been brought under better control, the police reported. The population of the area had a multi-racial and even cosmopolitan character being made up of Malays, Indians, Chinese, Whites, and Africans, but family life on any scale seems only to have been possible for Whites and Indians. There was a sharp decline in the number of African workers living in Bamboo Square in 1885, possibly as a result of compulsion to live in the compounds built in 1878 and only partially occupied for many years. The steady drop from 431 Africans in 1889 living in the area to 186 in 1893 was certainly the result of police pressure as the total population as a whole had expanded during this period. But despite the ruling class resistance to a permanent African working class the growth of families had not been completely suppressed. On the last date for which figures are available (1893) there were 18 women and 5 children among the African residents a sign that to a limited extent family life was possible for African people in the waterfront area. Even this small development posed a threat to the collective discipline exercised through the barracks over African workers.<sup>36</sup>

The reluctance of African workers to move into the barracks was met by a major policy of compulsion with a minor one of inducement. While backyard accommodation and the workers' shanties were being attacked, the Chairman of the

Sanitary Committee argued that residence in the barracks should be made compulsory for tog workers. 'If judiciously managed', he wrote 'These places may be made so attractive to the native as to induce him to give them his preference and this should be steadily kept in view, as compulsion would convey the idea of imprisonment to the untutored'.<sup>37</sup>

The exercise of force was more to the alternatives to the barracks rather than direct compulsion to live in them. Yet even these policies were unsuccessful in driving African workers to approved accommodation. By 1892 only about 140 workers occupied the barracks which were capable of accommodating 400-500. By this time the 'free' accommodation policy of 1878 had been modified as the workers were charged a rent of 2s 6d per month, and this was one of the workers' arguments against the system.<sup>38</sup> As the goal of control through inducements and suppression of alternatives proved inadequate, the Superintendent adopted an increasingly shrill tone and demanded the militarization of African labour.

If it is necessary (which it is) to keep an army of our own race in a compound after 9 p.m., it is surely more imperative that we should keep our 10,000 uneducated savages under similar control, for I see plainly that unless some steps are taken no amount of Police will be able to keep this Borough in the perfect order and safety I do so much desire.

This demand for placing African workers under direct police control in their non-working hours was modified only by a reactionary and false utopianism in his view of what was possible behind the enclosed walls of the compound.

Think again, the Natives could have in their own compound all that was necessary, such as eating-houses, schools, churches, playground, etc., and not as they are now, between 5 and 9 p.m. subjected to all the temptations for liquor and other vices and after that hour penned up in hovels (for a few pence) a vagabond to give them a pass to wander about after hours, or get one from some of their employer's family on the pretence of going to school.<sup>39</sup>

The peculiar juxtaposition of ideas of reform and bureaucratic control, the protest against the imprisonment of workers in hovels and the demand for tighter enforcement of the pass system, revealed the contradictions within the ruling class strategy towards the African working class. The police, who were in charge of enforcing the cheap labour system on a daily basis were possibly more aware than other sections of the municipal bureaucracy of the need to eliminate the shabby and inefficiently controlled private accommodation of African workers in favour of a solution more on the lines of monopoly capital in the mining industry. With the upswing in imports in the late 1890s and intense activity in the docks, a decisive settlement of the questions of accommodation and control of African workers on a municipal basis became an urgent priority.

### Labour intensity and national oppression

The concern of the political representatives of Durban's property owners to 'deal with' the problem of the togt workers varied considerably from year to year. At certain times the

control over these workers became a central issue for both municipal and colonial government (as in 1874), at other times these issues were considered mundane and routine. On occasion the political action taken by employers and the state against the workers was directly related to crises within the colonial economy, to the upswings and downturns of trade. More usefully, the general policies adopted by the municipal representatives can be related to the deeper transformations within the world economy, the increasing tendency towards monopoly capital and the sudden expansion of production in South Africa during the 'mining revolution.'

The growth in nationally oppressive legislation and policies was linked to the rising demand for labour over the whole period of the late 19th century and the intensity of that labour. The demand of property owners in Durban for segregationary measures was, for instance, related to the intensity of labour during the upswing in trade from 1887 to 1892. Electric lights were gradually introduced to enable work to carry on late into the night (until 2200 and 2300) as well as introducing Sunday work.<sup>40</sup> The lengthening of the working day and intensity of labour caused an increase in demand for African labour (employment rose from 403 employed on the wharves in 1887 to 1,067 in 1889), but also resulted in demands for African workers to be segregated in togt barracks. The white householders at the Point objected to the African labourers who worked late into

the night hanging around the Point area with friends.<sup>41</sup>

The greater propulsion of municipal policies was, however, the need for capital to have a disciplined labour force on tap day and night. Barrack accommodation would be the cheapest way of housing the workers and ensuring that discipline. The passes, raids on backyards and on shanties, and expansion of the police by taxing the workers, followed on logically. The togt workers were compelled to pay for their own policing through the registration system and high level of fines for contravening regulations; the amount spent on police salaries and rations alone more than doubling between 1877 and 1879.<sup>42</sup>

The togt regulations at a glance seem to be a self-perpetuating and effortless system of domination over the African working class, but contained their own contradictions. The large number of workseekers required to supply the urban labour market on a daily basis 'compelled the employment of a police force far larger than would otherwise be necessary', but the 'benefits' of the system (the barracks) could only be provided by a high level of repression which again required a larger police force.<sup>43</sup> The whole edifice of labour taxes, police, passes, and barracks, was intended to cheapen African labour power in the towns, but met a strong oppositional force in the resistance of the workers. During periods of economic upswing when African labour was in

strong demand wage increases could not be resisted and tended to undermine not only the low wages the system was intended to enforce but also the basis for the political rule over the African working class.

The whole direction of the bourgeoisie in colonial Natal was towards the expansion of commodity relations and new means of production at the fastest pace possible in the face of rising inter-imperialist competition. Far from the bourgeoisie bring<sup>ing</sup> in political reforms 'from above' in correspondence with its greater material achievements, in the towns which were the centre of its political rule and wealth, any movement by African workers towards expanding their area of unrestrained activity was met with the growing weight of the state fed by the appropriation of their unpaid labour. Far from the growing national oppression of the African people being determined by relics of the 'feudal' past, it has been argued that the elemental features of the modern apartheid system (barracks, passes, police control) developed from the rising contradictions within the growth of capitalism in an underdeveloped region. Each crisis of capital, world-wide and within the region, tended inexorably towards the development and routinization of class and national oppression. But the very extremity to which the bourgeoisie was driven in defining and redefining the relations of domination was also an acknowledgement of the growing powers of an increasingly self-confident African working class.

FOOTNOTES

1. Scott to Stanley, 2 June 1858, Correspondence between Secretary and Lieutenant Governor re the £5,000 reserved by the Charter for Native Purposes, 1859, Pietermaritzburg, p.52. The apparent 'American' spelling in the text is of the original.
2. The popular term for day labour in colonial Natal (and to the present time) is togt labour. The word's origin has been interpreted in two ways: as a corruption of the word dag which is the Dutch word for day, or as derived from the English word dock. Togat labour generally is used to refer specifically to daily dock labour although it will be seen that daily labour spread to other sectors as well.
3. Henry Pelling, 1976, A history of British trade unionism, Penguin, pp.64 and 75.
4. Chapter III, 11.
5. Chapter II, 7.
6. Chapter IV, 3.
7. Joshi (1942): 46.
8. L.C. No.6, 1869 (10 August 1869), Natal Government Gazette provides the figure of 20,000 African employees in that year, and L.C. No.12 (19 November 1872), the estimate of foreign workers.
9. Message No.21, L.C. No.3, 1869 (22 June 1869).
10. Russel (1869): 130. African workers demanded an improved diet and were occasionally rewarded with the cheapest cuts of meat.
11. Eliza W. Feilden, 1887, My African home, London, pp.138-9.
12. G.H. Mason, 1855, Life with the Zulus of Natal, South Africa, Longman, Brom, Green and Longmans: London, p.195.
13. Diary of A.H. Jones, Natal Archives, Accession No.29.
14. SNA, 1/1/15, No.36, Natal Archives.
15. Report of the Committee on the Government Letters on Assaults on European Women by Natives, Adjourned Committee Meeting, 21 April 1868.
16. Mayor's Minute, 1869.

17. Natal Almanac, 1873: iv.
18. Memorandum by the Secretary of Native Affairs on the evils arising out of the practice now becoming so general among the native labourers in the towns of Pietermaritzburg and Durban, of refusing employment except as jobbers, and the remedy suggested, Natal Government Gazette, 31 March 1874. My underlining.
19. Natal Government Gazette, 31 March 1874.
20. SNA, 1/7/8, Natal Archives.
21. Mayor's Minute.
22. Natal Chamber of Commerce, Annual Report, 1874, p.2.
23. Pelling (1977): 98 provides the information on London dockers' wages and an account of the strike which followed in that year. As late as 1880 the Superintendent of Police complained that African workers were becoming fond of drink and fine clothes and were earning more than some labouring men in England. Mayor's Minute, 1880:20.
24. Minutes of proceedings of Council, March 1875. The police used the togt regulations in a planned offensive against African workers who built their own accommodation in Durban. Police Report 363, 23 June 1875.
25. Simons (1969): 31.
26. Bukharin (1972):112-113.
27. Frere, British High Commissioner, to Hicks Beach, of the Colonial Office, 12 February 1879, quoted in C.W. de Kiewiet, 1965, The imperial factor in South Africa, Frank Cass: London, p.223.
28. SNA 1/1/26, Minute 93/1875, Police Report to City Council, 7 September 1875.
29. Police Report No.451, 7 October 1879, Durban Municipality.
30. Mayor's Minute, 1878.
31. Mayor's Minute, 1883.
32. Police Department, Mayor's Minute, 1885.
33. Report of the Superintendent of Police, Mayor's Minute, 1890.
34. Mayor's Minute, 1891.

35. Police Report 89, Council Minutes, 7 February 1893. The amount by which wages were reduced is not mentioned. The statistics on shipping and the value of imports and exports are provided in the Statistical Yearbooks of the Colony of Natal in the early years of the 20th century.
36. Figures on accommodation derived from Reports of the Superintendent of Water Police, Natal Harbour Board, Chairman's Minute and Departmental Reports.
37. Annexure C, Mayor's Minute 1890. My underlining.
38. Report of the Superintendent of Police, Mayor's Minute, 1892.
39. Police Report, Mayor's Minute, 1898.
40. Report of Wharfmaster, Mayor's Minute, 1889.
41. Report of Wharfmaster, Mayor's Minute, 1888.
42. SNA 1/4/3, C14/1889, Natal Archives and Mayor's Minutes for respective years.
43. Mayor's Minute, 1889.

## CHAPTER 2

## TOGT WORKERS AND THE FORMATION OF THE 'DURBAN SYSTEM'

Capital is command over labour.

Adam Smith

The regulation and limitation of togt labour...is unquestionably a subject of more importance than would appear at first sight. It is a class of labour which is under very little or loose control, a circumstance which is detrimental to morality and social order among a people, to whom restraint in a form more powerful than public opinion or conscientious scruples is still necessary.

Report of Native Affairs Commission, 1906-07, para 93.

The tremendous expansion of the world economy and inter-imperialist rivalries in the late 19th century secured effectively the subordination of almost all the population of Africa and Asia to formal imperialist control. The destruction of tribal kingdoms, principalities, and small republics (as in the case of the Boer republics) was both an economic and political process; the free circulation of commodities undermining handicraft production, and the military arm of imperialist countries breaking up the political unity of agrarian societies. The intrusion of one common factor (imperialist domination) over a variety of subjugated peoples gave rise to national movements in the colonies, and the growth of capitalist production to the formation of a working class. In South Africa which became the arena for imperialist wars involving the direct intervention of British troops against the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, the Zulu in the area north of Natal, and finally against the Boer Republics, the growth of nationalism and class consciousness arose in response to the specific forms of capitalist domination.

War is a power accelerator of social tendencies, and modern imperialist wars have required an increase in the ideological content of the struggle against opposing military forces. Military struggles between peoples have a political purpose, or as Lenin argued: 'war is a continuation of the politics of particular classes in their pursuit of class goals'.<sup>1</sup>

The South African war which was fought by thousands of British troops against the Boer Republics involved the mobilisation of all forms of transport and production in the struggle to assert the hegemony of British imperialism over the form of state developing in South Africa. The war involved a tremendous expansion in wage labour for African people: as labourers for the British army, transport riders, agricultural workers, and dock workers. The British army paid higher wages to indigenous workers and provided better diet in an attempt to secure a plentiful labour supply. The expansion in demand for labour marked by the South African war disturbed the pattern of stable low wages and exposed African workers to the contradictions within the ruling class in Southern Africa. As an extension of politics by other means, the South African war introduced African workers to the politics of imperialism in the guise of liberalism: opposition to Boer 'slavery', arguments for equality within the British Empire, etc. The conclusion of the war was, however, marked by a capitalist crisis caused by the overexpansion of unproductive military expenditure and its sudden collapse, resulting in the growth in the exploitation of workers and national oppression. In Durban as elsewhere in South Africa, increased racism and demands for segregation were a response to this crisis and working class resistance. The contradictions within this crisis were brought out clearly by the struggle of the togt workers and the intense debates within the local state on the appropriate form of accommodation and control of these workers.

Accelerated proletarianization, a rapidly expanding industrial reserve army, and the rapid growth of political consciousness of the African masses (initially in the form of Ethiopianism) disturbed the relations of domination between the local ruling class and the growing African petty bourgeoisie and working class. The moral panics expressed in the cry of 'black peril' were centred in the urban centres and were a means of mobilizing ruling class ideology against African workers and disciplining aberrant whites. The relations of dominance in the countryside were being challenged by increasingly assertive black agricultural producers (particularly sharecroppers on white farms), and a desperate African peasantry. The hysteria of the black peril crises was evidence of the disintegration of bourgeois ideology as a means of subordinating African (particularly African workers) resistance. The crisis was ultimately resolved only with the slaughter which followed the Bambata rebellion and the formulation of more sophisticated ideology of segregation and racism. The Bambata uprising marked some of the most determined resistance to state intervention to secure effective subordination and accelerated proletarianization. Despite this important aspect of resistance (fought in many cases by African workers who returned from the cities) the crisis in relations of domination in the urban centres is crucial for understanding of the development of systematic subordination (particularly in the municipal departments of 'Native Administration') and the ideological formulation of 'satisfactory race relations'.

It is in the urban centres that there is the most concrete evidence of the resistance of the black proletariat and indications of its consciousness. The struggle of the black proletariat against the system created by capital and the state to reproduce cheap labour power (the master and servants legislation, labour tax, pass laws, curfews, and compounds) brought the issue of 'detrribalization' and class consciousness into the debates on the appropriate forms of control, particularly into demands for segregation.

The togt workers in Durban who serviced the most important port in Southern Africa were an important element in the black proletariat and engaged in resistance to the increasingly developed forms of control and post-war levels of exploitation. The growing resistance of African workers to the penal labour contracts of the Master and Servants Act and the rising demand for dock labour stimulated the expansion of togt labour during the period of the South African war. In response there was a vigorous debate within the ruling class about the form of contract which should be the basis of wage labour in the urban centres within the context of the overall social and political controls over the African population. As African workers came to understand the points of vulnerability of the ruling class so there was an increase in confidence and action. The local bourgeoisie reacted with meetings on the 'proper' relations which should exist between black servants and white masters, and arguments for stricter discipline over Africans in town generally. In particular the issue focused on arguments whether blacks should be allowed to walk on the

pavements in Durban (a point which was vigorously debated in most urban centres during the post-war crisis). From these discussions a reform movement was established which argued for segregation as a solution for racial conflict and as a means of securing a continued supply of cheap labour. The most concerted response to the growth of an increasingly assertive black proletariat in the cities was the development of a Native Administration to regularize and institutionalize the relations of domination, and to attack the basis for African family life in the cities and political action by the black working class.

These initiatives on the part of the local bourgeoisie met with an ambiguous response from the African petty bourgeoisie, even from politically conscious elements in the formative national movement, which resisted aspects of racial oppression but were also opposed to strikes, in favour of an austere work ethic, and opposed to liquor brewing. By the beginning of the First World War there was a considerable expansion of the local state in Durban, and growing sophistication in regulating the lives of African workers. The justification for extensive state intervention in the labour market advanced from the unsubtle direct support of the interests of employers to considerations of social welfare and a benign paternalism. Native Administration in Durban which grew parasitically from taxing African workers, gradually achieved a greater uniformity and internal routine and became known to its opponents and advocates as the 'Durban system'. This system of administration sought to maintain the subordination of African

workers in the cities and the cheap labour system under the new levels of proletarianization of the early 1900s and against the rising demands of African workers. The department which was initially based on the establishment of a beer monopoly was able to expand the detailed control over African employment, provide municipal compounds as the most effective form of mass accommodation, deny family life to African workers, and expand the bureaucracy of the local state. All these points were necessary elements in an integrated approach to the African proletariat in the post-South African war period.

#### Rising employment, resistance and reaction

The South African war following on the rindepest epidemic of 1896-7 marked an important phase in the formation of an African proletariat and the growth of differentiation in the African peasantry. For the mass of African workers and peasants this period increased dependence on wage labour as the major source of income. There was a marked increase in indebtedness to traders and farmers.<sup>2</sup> Though the increase in employment by the British army compensated in some measure for the virtual closing of the gold mines, many workers families were reduced to dependence on food relief particularly in the devastated northern areas of Natal. The British army employed African workers in the Cape at 60s a month with rations for a three month contract, and Basuto workers in Bloemfontain were paid 40s, but workers in Natal received only 30s. Where voluntary recruitment failed, African workers (particularly refugees) were subject to conscription or

maintained at labour depots as a reserve labour force.<sup>3</sup> This form of labour was resisted by the workers in the form of enormous desertion rates and occasional strikes. In the countryside the scorched earth policy followed by the British Army destroyed the crops of African farmers. The disruption of food supplies intensified pressure on the food resources of the remaining rural areas. The higher prices for grain stimulated production among the well-to-do peasantry in certain areas, especially in Natal and Pondoland, but for the poorer strata the war crisis terminated their independence from wage labour and increased their cash requirements.<sup>4</sup> The post-war regime of direct rule by British imperialism enabled a united policy to be adopted by the local bourgeoisie in the form of a savage attack on the wage levels of labourers, increased taxation, and reorganized labour supplies. African workers who jubilantly burned their passes when British troops entered Johannesburg in June 1900<sup>5</sup> were soon subjected to an even more rigorous labour regime. African workers responded with a series of strikes and resistance on the Witwatersrand in 1901-02, and their actions were matched by workers in Pietermaritzburg and Durban where demands for increased wages, backed by strike action, continued up to 1904.

The overwhelming number of African workers in employment were migrants from rural areas, particularly the reserves, and 6,967 were 'foreign' migrants from Lesotho and Mozambique.\* A persistent policy followed by all municipalities from the 1870s had severely

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\* For employment figures see Table 1.

restricted the settlement of African workers with their families in the urban areas, and the age/sex composition of the African population in the towns shows very few women and children. African migration flowed from underdeveloped areas to coastal plantations and commercial agriculture, mining areas and to the urban centres. Figure 1 presents the data on the movement of African workers from rural areas especially to Durban (18,100 workers), Pietermaritzburg (7,586), and centres of agricultural capitalist production. The outflow of workers came not only from the reserves but to a lesser extent from white farming areas, a cause for continual complaint and agitation by white farmers who demanded controls over migration, in particular legislation to strengthen the control of the African patriach in families on farms. Controls were also demanded particularly by white farmers over the movement of African workers out of Natal, a delicate issue to be raised in the negotiations between sections of the bourgeoisie investigating unification of South Africa.

The statistics on numbers of African male migrant workers from rural areas show 29 counties exporting and 11 importing labour. The spread of workers from neighbouring counties to the urban centres to those most distant, provides some indication of the extent of impoverishment in the countryside: Vryheid in the northern area of Natal providing most migrants followed by Mapumulo which is in the 'catchment' area for labour supplies to the sugar plantations and Durban. The extent of labour supplies from Zululand (particularly

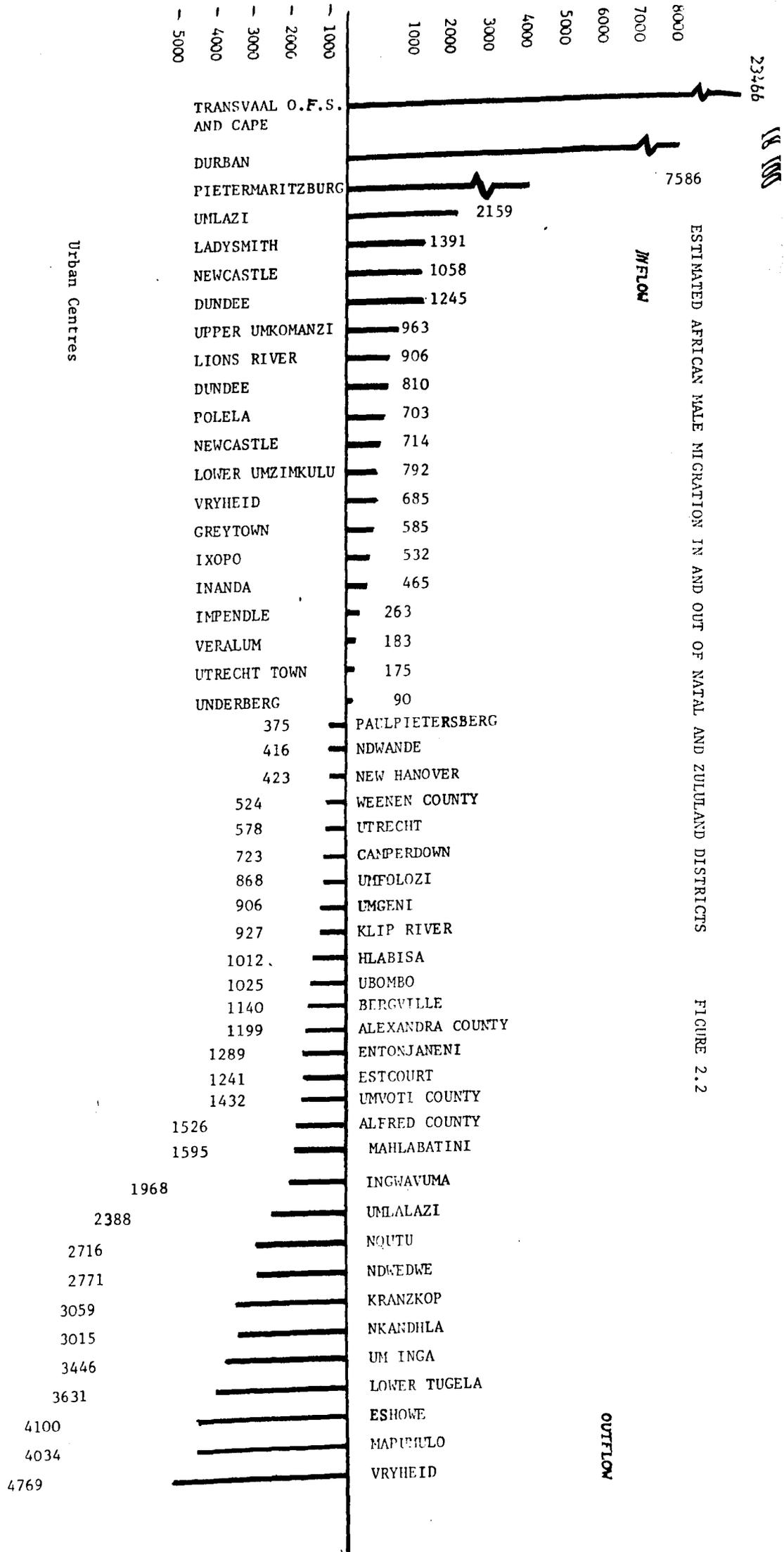
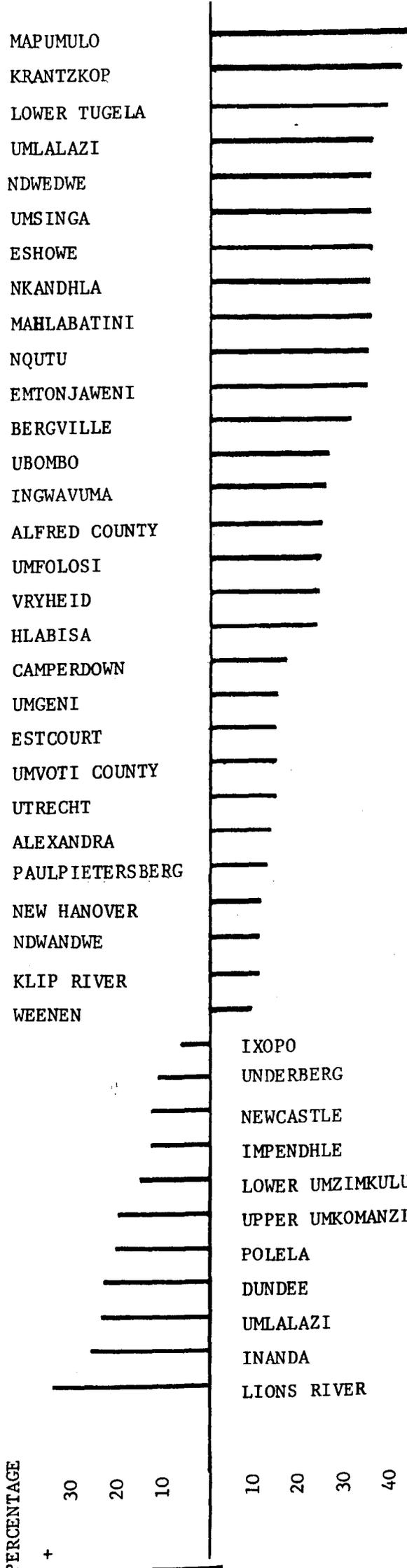


FIGURE 2.1

PROPORTION OF AFRICAN MALE ADULT POPULATION IN NATAL AND ZULULAND RURAL DISTRICTS



Eshowe, Nkandhla, Nqutu, Ingwavuma, and Mahlabatini) shows the extent to which capitalist relations had penetrated into 'traditional' areas of patriarchal society. By adopting the concept of rates of migration in relation to rural concentrations of African population, a more qualitative approach can be used to assess the primary areas of export of labour.\* The statistics (Figure 1) demonstrate the lack of correlation between the areas exporting the greatest volume of labour to those with the highest rates of male labour migration. The general pattern which emerges is that of the greatest proletarianization in the reserves adjacent to the urban centres, followed by reserves further distant, and then by white agricultural areas.

There was a considerable expansion in employment in Natal during the war years 1899-1902 particularly in transport and the docks, but also in mining and industrial production. Coal mining was disrupted to some extent between 1899-1900 when production declined from 329 to 241 000 tons, but the mines continued to employ just over 2000 African workers<sup>6</sup>. African employment in industry expanded considerably in the period between 1900-04 from 6337 to 10,378 workers, an increase

\* This approach owes much to the work of Jill Nattrass (September 1975) who skillfully employs population analysis to calculate the movement of migrant workers. The migration rate = adult African male migrants - African adult males in rural areas + migrants, c.f. Nattrass (September 1975): 8. The migration rate from rural districts on this calculation does not take account of the permanent urban working class population, which at this point is not very large.

of 64 per cent. In 1900 African workers constituted 29 per cent of an industrial labour force of 22,047 and were mainly concentrated in food and drink (1,881), building materials (1,981), metal works (1,373), and brick yards (1,128). By far the largest single concentration of African workers in one occupation were the Durban dock workers who numbered about 2800 in 1900 and expanded to about 5100 in 1904.<sup>7</sup> By 1904 some 76,700 African male workers were in wage employment in Natal and it was estimated that 23,500 were employed in other colonies.<sup>8</sup> If employment in Natal and elsewhere is totalled, then 41 per cent of an estimated 244,500 adult African males were in wage employment. Labour supplies at this level indicate a high level of proletarianization and labour migration from even the most remote reserves. No calculation is made here of the growing industrial reserve army of labour; the unemployed migrants 'resting' after employment, and the increasing number of African women workers.

TABLE 2.1     AFRICANS ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE IN NATAL, 1904

		Male	Female
A.	Professional	1,700	-
B.	Domestic	30,100	10,200
C.	Commercial	2,200	-
D.	Transport and communication:		
	Docks	5,100 <sup>1</sup>	-
	Other	2,700	-
E.	Industrial	10,400	-
F.	Mining	3,000 <sup>2</sup>	-
G.	Agriculture	23,300 <sup>3</sup>	-
H.	Peasants	<u>185,200<sup>4</sup></u>	<u>292,500</u>
		<u>263,700</u>	<u>302,700</u>

Source: Natal Census, 1904: p.678

Table continued .....

TABLE Continued .....

1. Dock workers calculated from Mayor's Minute, 1904 and 'other' the difference between all transport and communication workers and dock workers.
2. Mining workers an estimate allowing for increased employment for increased production 1900-04.
3. Agricultural workers calculated by subtracting the sum of B+C+D+E (non-agricultural wage employment) from the total of 76,713 African male workers in employment (Natal Census, 1904: 64).
4. Calculated from category "primary producers of material" less agricultural and mining workers.

Without undertaking a comprehensive analysis of each area of export of labour power from the table below, it can be shown that the most impoverished areas are those which are reserves and which have very little local employment.<sup>9</sup>

TABLE 2.2      MOST IMPOVERISHED LABOUR EXPORTING AREAS

	Migration rate*	Local Employment
Mapumulo	46	85
Kranskop	44	477
Lower Tugela	41	935
Umlalazi	39	309
Ndwedwe	39	61
Umsinga	38	309
Eshowe	38	1,062
Nkandhla	38	267
Mahlabatini	37	145
Nqutu	37	291

\*Proportion of total adult males absent.

Source: Appendix and Natal Census, 1904.

The rate of migration of African males from these areas indicates the high level of proletarianization and the creation of an industrial reserve army for capital in areas quite distant from major urban centres. A migration rate of more than 30 per cent would present a high level of participation in wage labour; those present in the rural areas including workers returning from employment to maintain their families, others possibly not being able to get employment.

There were two main streams of migration for workers in Natal and Zululand; towards the Witwatersrand from the northern areas of Vryheid and Umsinga, and towards the urban areas of Pietermaritzburg and Durban from the midlands and Zululand. Durban attracted migrant workers from throughout the colony, from the south (Pondoland) and the north (Mozambique), as well as immigrant workers from Mauritius, St. Helena, and India.

TABLE 2.3                      AFRICAN POPULATION IN DURBAN, ORIGINS

	Male	Female
Natal	12,010	622
Zululand	5,259	41
Mozambique	424	3
Swaziland	142	2
Pondoland	113	-
Natal Census, 1904: 376		

The extent of proletarianization of the workforce can be seen by the ages of workers. A heavier dependence on wage labour would be demonstrated by workers starting wage employment at an earlier age and leaving off well into their mature years. The population data on Durban indicates employment of young boys below the age of 15 and men over 40; within the labour force there was a core of workers forced into wage labour at an early age and unable to retire until shortly before their death.

TABLE 2.4    AGE, SEX, AND EMPLOYMENT OF AFRICAN POPULATION,  
DURBAN

	Male	Female	Employment
1 -5	53	55	
5 -15	1,702	84	1,618*
15 -40	15,421	522	15,943
40+	1,060	32	1,092
	<u>18,236</u>	<u>693</u>	<u>18,653</u>

\*African male youth employment is calculated here on the difference between male and female youths 5-15, assuming that no girls were in wage employment.

Natal Census, 1904: 267-268

Despite the policy of denying African families residence in the urban areas the children enumerated in the census show that there was a demographic basis for arguing that the African workers in the town were becoming fully proletarianized and permanent urban workers. From the census data there could have been up to 200 African families living in Durban!0

By the turn of the century African workers in Durban were channelled into four major 'labour markets' which related to the level of accumulation of capital and were closely regulated by the local state: togt workers, washermen, ricksha pullers, and monthly contract workers. Each 'market' had its own regulations, was characterised by a rapid turnover of workers, and was taxed to pay for policing, sanitation, and a general subsidy to the local state. The taxes (in the form of registration fees) also served the function of forcing workers into employment contracts on the least favourable terms and acted as a pressure to reduce wages: what the employers lost in terms of the demands for higher wages they gained in terms of lower municipal rates subsidised by revenue from African workers. Despite persistent attempts to control the expansion of togt labour and to channel African workers into monthly employment under the penal discipline of the Master and Servants Act, the employers acknowledged that as a seaport Durban would always have a large proportion of togt workers to keep the wage costs of shipping companies low. The issue was rather the control of togt labour (both the wages demanded and the form of accommodation provided) and to maintain sufficient labour supply in each sector: washermen, ricksha, togt, and monthly labour. The most tightly regulated sections of the labour market were the rickshaw, togt, and washermen workers because of their exposure to policy scrutiny and concentration in compounds. The monthly contracts registered were only a fraction of the workers employed in commerce, domestic service, industry, and municipal service.

The togt system and working class resistance

The war in the interior increased tremendously the amount of cargo handled in the Durban docks; war material, food, and equipment for the reorganization of production on the Rand. The strategic situation of the Durban docks apart, important improvement had been taking place in mechanical handling of cargo and in deepening the mouth of the Bay to admit the largest ships. By 1904 the Chairman of the Natal Chamber of Commerce could boast:

Our harbour is now, undoubtedly, the best in South Africa. We offer facilities in every department second to those of no other port. Steamers of practically any size can enter or leave this port at any state of the tide, and any hour of the day or night. Such a thing as lighterage at the outer anchorage is absolutely unknown, and the great saving this means to shipowners is too obvious to need comment.<sup>11</sup>

These improved conditions which could guarantee lower costs and higher profits for shipowners were based on a proficient group of dock workers and collective action by employers to suppress the upward movement of wages. Despite the cheapness of labour, new developments such as the increased export and bunkering of coal tended to become mechanized and the overall demand for dock labour reduced. One of the most labour-intensive operations in the docks, loading coal on to ships, became mechanized fairly rapidly after Natal coal was demonstrated to be suitable for export. The new system of a £60,000 loading plant with a daily capacity of 4,000 tons was in striking contrast to the old system by which

coal was carried on board from railway trucks in baskets by  
 12  
 African on narrow planks. Despite some advance in  
 mechanization, the docks proved to be an area of transport  
 which demanded virtually unlimited supplies of labour during  
 the war period.

The increased activity in the docks lead both to an  
 increase in the absolute numbers of workers in the docks and  
 the intensity of their labour (in the case of daily paid  
 workers the possibility of work every day of the week).

TABLE 2.5. LABOUR SUPPLY AND PRODUCTIVITY, 1898-1905

	Tonnage landed 000 tons	Togt workers (average/month)	Tonnage landed per worker
1898	441	2,326	190
1899	521	2,509	207
1900	795	2,832	281
1901	944	3,790	249
1902	1,103	4,753	232
1903	1,288	5,125	251
1904	797	5,116	156
1905	748	1,934	387

(Compiled from Reports of the Port Captain of tonnage of  
 imported cargo, and Mayor's Minutes of each year).

Although the concept of tonnage landed per togt worker is  
 necessarily imprecise because of the tendency of togt labour to  
 spread into other sectors than the docks during times of  
 labour shortage and the fact that by the very nature of the work  
 the workers are not fully employed, this figure does give some

indication of the intensity of labour in the docks. The figures indicate an increased intensity of work with gradual increase in labour supply up to 1900, followed by a period in which labour supplies increase in greater proportion to the increase in tonnage landed. The situation in 1905 reflected both the collapse of trade in that year and the resistance of workers to the new conditions of togt labour; the crisis leading to increased levels of exploitation of workers in terms of tonnage landed per worker.

The increased demand for togt labour in the late 1890s had two important effects: firstly, it enabled the workers to increase their resistance to exploitation and subordination in the cities and, secondly, it caused a shift in the labour market away from monthly labour under the Master and Servants Act. Despite the attempts by employers and the state to squeeze togt workers into monthly labour, the relative relationship between monthly and togt registrations remained stable despite the increase in employment. In 1901 there were 2.28 monthly workers for every togt worker, in 1904 there were 2.10, only a small minority of monthly workers being registered. It was only with the post-war economic crisis that a decisive movement towards monthly employment took place and by 1907 there were 11.26 monthly workers for every togt worker.<sup>13</sup> This transformation was brought about through the controls introduced through the revised Togg Law but also accentuated by the crisis of accumulation in Southern Africa which led to a decline in tonnage landed in Durban docks in 1907 to about half of that in 1904.

As the major concentration of the African proletariat in Natal, the dock workers became the focus of antagonism for employers concerned about the ability of these workers to force wages up and resist controls of both employers and the local state. In 1895 about 200 dock workers 'led by one six feet high' marched to the residence of the Durban agent of the Union Company. These workers had demanded 6s per day instead of the existing wage of 4s. It appears they were diverted back to the docks when the agent told them to report their troubles to his representative at the docks. The press was quick in its response: 'It is evident that the Natives are fully alive to the scarcity of labour and want to take advantage of it', complained the Natal Witness.<sup>14</sup> The local state responded to the increased demands of workers with more prosecutions for not complying with togt regulations which made it compulsory for African workers to work for the wage laid down in the regulations if offered employment. The rapid expansion of togt labour during the war years was followed by a series of disputes, riots and general insubordination in the docks. In 1901 the local magistrate complained that togt workers 'do not abide by the rate fixed under the Togg Regulations', and were demanding and receiving 4s a day at the Point. By the following year he reported that the problem of wages and labour supply had reached 'a more acute stage' exacerbated by the outbreak of bubonic plague in the dock area in November 1902 and the implementation of the Identification Act which served to reinforce the pass system.<sup>15</sup> The bubonic plague which initially caused the death of at least 13 African workers gave the authorities the opportunity of demolishing working class housing in the Point area and evacuation

of residents. The Medical Officer of Health reported that the 'lowest grade of such buildings have disappeared' when hundreds of huts were demolished. Indians and Africans who were suspected of being diseased were forcibly segregated in a camp and guarded by Special Plague Police. An immediate improvement was made in the sanitary conditions of Indian houses and African compounds at Bamboo Square and elsewhere, the demolition of houses being the 'readiest and surest method of disinfection'. Emergency regulations gave the authorities even more power than the by-laws for demolishing huts, and large scavenging gangs were employed in cleaning up rubbish and demolishing huts and shanties. As the campaign against the plague became more organised the source of infection was seen to be Indian and African communities at the Point, in the Eastern Vlei and at the foot of Sydenham Road, rather than the plague rats.<sup>16</sup> The Medical Officer of Durban reported ironically that overcrowding among Indians and Africans had been abruptly halted by wholesale evacuation and demolition had gone ahead without much concern for working class housing whose value 'was not very much.' There was a tremendously high death rate particularly among Indian and African people; out of a total of 124 deaths from the plague 75 were Indians and 38 were Africans.<sup>17</sup> The attack on black working class housing in the dock area reversed the tendency throughout seaports in capitalist countries for the workers to be housed in family accommodation in densely populated areas in and around the wharves and warehouses.

In the conditions of labour shortage created by the rapid increase in trade through Durban the togt workers demanded increased wage and fewer controls. The strike action undertaken by dock workers provides evidence of a growing job consciousness, the refusal to do work not specified in their contractual engagement, and a wage appropriate to the skilled nature of stevedoring work. While job consciousness is not conducive to the overall unity of the working class (stressing of necessity the differentiation between different forms of work and of workers) in the migratory labour system which acts to submerge any form of working class consciousness, the job consciousness of the stevedoring togt workers strengthened the resistance to capital. Togt workers resisted the general relations of subordination in the city; worked outside the discipline of a master and servant relationship; attacked the African police force, and disputed their wages and contracts of work. Shortly before the outbreak of the plague there was a clash between some 227 togt workers at Renaud's compound and the municipal African police. This clash was indicative of the hatred of African workers for the police control over their lives, a feeling which was accentuated during the improved conditions of class struggle during the South African war in the Natal urban centres. This tendency was noted by the magistrate in Durban who reported there was general resistance to the police: 'Occasionally when arrests have to be made at ricksha sheds, frequented by large number of boys there arises active resistance (to) the Police, even though accompanied by European Officers.'<sup>18</sup> The togt workers were

arrested and the case given priority by the authorities; those considered to be the ringleaders were punished and the others cautioned and discharged. Unspecified steps were taken to guard against further attacks on African police, and bring workers housed in barracks under more effective control. Occurring before the outbreak of the plague, this attack on the police strengthened the arguments of those in the local state who felt the alarming 'spirit of lawlessness' could only be brought under control through determined implementation of evacuating African workers from the town to a peripheral area on the boundary.

A series of strikes took place in the following years, 1903-04, in support of demands for higher wages and against changes in job demarcation (generally by stevedoring workers refusing to do the work of dock labourers or coal bunkering). Despite the penal provisions of the tegt regulations which effectively made strikes illegal and punishable by a maximum of three months hard labour with spare diet<sup>19</sup> workers came out on strike without the support of the growing nationalist movement or the organised labour movement, which in Durban consisted of trade unions in the railways and other industries and the Clarion Fellowship which was basically oriented to the British labour activities. The radical African petty bourgeoisie was committed to such issues as abstinence and a Protestant work ethic

as well as land rights and the franchise. It failed to provide any leadership on the central issues in the towns and absolutely opposed the strike movement among African workers, blaming white workers for setting a bad example. Despite the support of the white labour movement's representatives for colonial rule over Africans, there was at least one instance in which white workers who objected to their conditions of work agitated for African workers to strike against these oppressive conditions and meagre wages. The whole direction of white labour leadership and the local bourgeoisie was towards incorporation of white workers in the political domination of the ruling class over the African masses and development of racial ideology to eliminate any points of solidarity between white and black workers. White labour representatives in Natal argued that class struggle between white workers and employers set a bad example to Africans. Instead they proposed forms of industrial conciliation to resolve disputes before they reached the stage of strike action. W. McLarty, the Labour Member for Durban, who was also a member of the Durban Stock Exchange and closely connected with many coal mining and commercial companies argued that strikes such as that of white bricklayers were being followed by strikes of African workers, such as the African tramwaymen. 'We have the Native population growing up around us, and being educated, and they are learning to strike', he told the Natal Legislative Assembly.<sup>20</sup> As a 'champion of the (white) working classes' described by Twentieth Century he had the distinction of getting Indian porters removed from the Natal Government Railways and replaced by whites.

The radical African petty bourgeoisie which similarly argued that the African masses were imitative of white workers also deplored the strike movement. Although John Dube, editor of Ilanga lase Natal, complained that African strikers were arrested while whites were not punished, he accused white workers of setting a bad example to African workers by refusing to work and demanding what he regarded as 'unheard of wages'. These comments were republished approvingly by the Natal Mercury on 20 May 1903. Mark Radebe,<sup>21</sup> editor of Ipepo lo Hlanga and a founder member of the Natal Native Congress was more forthright:

As we pointed out in these columns the evil of strikes so far as the natives are concerned, a little while ago, it was only to be expected that our people would be seized by the disease and allow themselves to be misled. We first heard of a strike amongst natives at the Point. Fortunately, this was promptly dealt with, and a stop was effected.<sup>22</sup>

Without falling into the conception of African workers as simple-minded imitators of white workers, the strike movement among white printers, railwaymen, and bricklayers did undoubtedly stimulate African workers to study the tactics of organization. The togt workers had put forward their demands in an organized way as early as 1874, in this sense refuting both the chauvinist labour movement and the staid views of the mission educated nationalists.

At the turn of the century African workers who were employed in all the types of work in the harbour were increasingly confident of their collective strength and ability to resist their employers and the state. A contemporary report gives some of the atmosphere of the sheer muscular expenditure of labour power and the collective skills of the workers:

Scores and hundreds of Zulus - lithe, active, muscular men lined the wharf, actively engaged in loading and unloading the ships. They lifted and trundled into the sheds and warehouses huge boxes of merchandise, doing their heavy work in the broiling sun with apparent ease and playfulness. Never had I seen workers play with hard work and enjoy it as did these Zulus.<sup>23</sup>

African workers were dominant in harbour employment, white labourers were said to be unable to compete. The strength of African workers in production was reinforced during the outbreak of plague.

The fear of the plague drove many African workers out of Durban in early 1903 and led to a real shortage of labour. In May 1903 a gang of dock workers who took advantage of this situation were arrested at St. Paul's wharf for refusing to work, presumably in support of demands for higher wages.<sup>24</sup> Another strike took place as a direct result of the agitation of white workers who were disgusted with the low level of wages paid in the docks. The Superintendent of Durban Police, Alexander, was careful to exonerate the African press from any blame for the strike; instead he blamed 'the low European' who agitated for African workers to resist their oppressive work conditions:

(The African workers) saw we were pushed for labour; they saw the white men would not work for less than 10s. I sent down 150 unemployed Europeans to the wharf for five shillings a day, where they would get shelter and everything else, and they flung up the job. Then they turned to the Kafirs and said: 'Why do you work for so and so?'<sup>25</sup>

This revolt against the cheap labour system in the docks was led by the stevedoring togt workers, according to Alexander whom

he described as seasoned workers who were very valuable men 'because they knew exactly what they had to do.' It was these men who joined the white workers immediately afterwards in support of the 10s wage demand.<sup>26</sup> On another occasion (the date of the strike was not mentioned in evidence) when African dock workers demanded 4s a day instead of the existing rate of 3s 6d, the municipal police took vigorous counteraction: 'That all ended in smoke, as they were cleared out, and soon came back'.<sup>27</sup> Other strikes demonstrated the advance in job consciousness by the stevedoring togt workers who became more distinct from 'jobbers', or from dock labourers and bunkering workers employed on long contracts. They realized how dependent their employers were on their skills as the volume of trade expanded enormously, and demanded the employers take on labourers to carry heavy timber or bunker ships. They struck when required to carry heavy timber on one occasion and refused to carry coal on another.<sup>28</sup> The large number of workers who argued they had been engaged to load cargo and not carry coal in June 1903 were arrested, brought before the magistrate and fined 4s each. The growing independence of this core group of togt workers was shown when the new togt regulations were introduced in May 1904 increasing the registration fee from 2s 6d to 5s, adding a booking fee; making a total increase of 5s per month in tax, tripling the tax burden on togt workers. 'This extra 5s suddenly clapped upon them', Alexander remarked in evidence 'has caused 811 last week to throw down their badges and return home.'<sup>29</sup> The workers who stayed on hired a lawyer to take up their case against the municipality.<sup>30</sup> The increased industrial action by togt workers

improved the wages paid in the dock area considerably; according to the figures produced by a major employer wages increased from 2s a day in 1894 to 2s 6d in 1899 and finally to 3s in 1902. These figures seem to apply more to the dock labourer than the stevedoring worker, many of whom were already earning 4s a day in 1895, but they do indicate how far workers were able to improve their wages through demands and strikes.<sup>31</sup> The upward pressure on wages did not pass unnoticed by employers in the docks or more importantly by the bourgeoisie in Natal as a whole. The reaction to rising wage rates and the greater confidence of African workers went further than the reduction of wages (although that was a central focus in the immediate post-war period) but extended to demands for segregation, the growth of racism, and more effective controls over African workers.

#### The post-war regime and origins of Native Administration

The immediate post-war situation was one in which for the first time there was a co-ordinated strategy in relation to African workers under <sup>the</sup> aegis of direct rule by British imperialism. In the mining industry the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association acted as the recruiting agency of the Chamber of Mines and a maximum average wage system was instituted reducing wages to a maximum of 2s 3d a day.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the country the cry was for cheaper labour and a co-ordinated reduction of African wages. An extensive debate was initiated on the cheapest form of labour including the mass importation of labour from throughout Africa or more particularly from China.

In Natal as elsewhere employers acted with a dual tactic; the forcible reduction of wage levels, an increase in the overall supply of labour. As these counter strategies developed so some of the contradictions were explored; the growing differentiation between African workers (which involved a grudging acceptance of the concept of a 'skilled African worker'), the question of whether workers segregated in locations would challenge the cheap labour system, and the appropriate policy towards African women in the cities. Although the wage relationship was the first issue to be dealt with by the state and employers, the non-wage aspects of the capital relation soon came to the fore; the reproduction of the cheap labour system as a whole. It is these issues in particular which give the debates within the bourgeoisie a modern ring; housing for African workers, stabilized labour against the possibility of permanent migrant labour, and questions of the conflict between different capitals and the overall capitalist strategy expressed through the colonial and local state. The severe capitalist crisis which followed the South African war could only be resolved, it will be argued, by increased repression of the black working class and peasantry culminating in the massacres which followed the Bambata uprising. It was this brutal intervention which cleared the ground for the more routine adjustments of the relations of subordination in the development of Native Administration and municipal by-laws which secured the cheap labour system in the urban areas and covered the minutiae of appropriate behaviour of Africans in their relationship with white masters and Indian workers.

As the city having the largest increase in African workers during the war period (Johannesburg's labour supplies were disrupted, the Cape Town could rely more on the use of Coloured workers), Durban became the cockpit for contending theories and policies of social and political control over Black workers. The resolution of these ideological and political struggles had an important effect on the course of policies of exploitation and control and in particular on the development of the local state which influenced municipal policies throughout South Africa. In two important articles Swanson has surveyed the origins of the 'Durban system' as an early form of urban apartheid in which the key concepts and basic components of urban segregation developed.<sup>33</sup> These articles cover quite adequately a description of the controversies and problems faced by employers and the municipality in the late 19th and early 20th century and focus attention on the progressive development of forms of racial oppression rather than their installation with the advent of the National Party government in 1948. As a continuation of the tendency within modern liberal historiography which rejects the superficial analysis of the rise of apartheid and attempts a more rigorous study of the history of race relations in South Africa, this work advances considerably our understanding of a crucial period in the growth of segregation. Despite the meticulous research employed, Swanson's articles fail to advance a convincing theory for the implementation of segregation and social controls beyond the 'particular combinations of event and circumstance' and an analysis of the 'moving forces' in the ideological and policy battles being 'bureaucratic and

individualistic'.<sup>34</sup> Although the social class data on the individuals involved in these debates is presented, there is no thorough exposition of the class forces behind the give and take which occurred between the merchants, manufacturers, shipping agents and contractors, lawyers, building contractors and other property owners who made up the local state in Durban. In the absence of a theory of the local state as a form of class rule, the discussion of different strategies in maintaining the relations of domination tend to become reduced to a conception of ideological bureaucrats struggling against vested interests (a key concept in Swanson's writings) reluctant to do anything which would jeopardize their control over labour or increase the costs of municipal government. In discussion of these issues I will be arguing that the solution to the problems of political and social subordination of black workers can only be understood in terms of the rising resistance of African workers and peasants during a moment of capitalist crisis. The intervention of the state in legislation segregating African workers, the policing of dock workers, and the military action taken against insurgents in the countryside, cannot be understood in terms of particular interest groups or vested interests<sup>35</sup> (or more sophisticatedly fractions of capital) or in terms of an obsessive bureaucracy, but rather from an understanding of the state as an instrument of class rule which secures the interests of capital in general. It is only from this perspective that the events of a particular city and the actions of English speaking town councillors can be understood to produce an important element in the highly regulated system of capitalist oppression which is apartheid.

Swanson does carry the debate about the origin of apartheid further than the contradiction between economic integration and the contrary forces impelling political separation. While the movement of African people to the urban areas should tend to cause the separation of black and white to decline, Swanson argues that urbanization brought about an increased demand for separation.

....one may wonder how it is that origins of apartheid are found in the same phenomenon that seems to be making it harder and harder to apply that policy, namely, the urban and industrial economy with its insatiable demand for labour and its tendency to draw all kinds of people into ever greater interdependence and closer association. The answer is that this process of concentrating population also generated increasing concern for its consequences among officials and citizens alike, a concern which tended to follow established patterns of thought in facing new and very great problems of social organization and control.<sup>36</sup>  
(My underlining).

While this is a valid generalization and carries our understanding of the conflict which produces demands for separation forward to some extent, this characterization of the process of urbanization itself producing social antagonism mystifies the prior question of capital accumulation. It is the growing accumulation of capital in specific areas (e.g. mining) which brings into <sup>being</sup> new forms of social relations and a working class. Capital does not only bring about general shifts in population but draws upon the most able and intelligent sections of that population for the growing urban areas, and a highly selective population in terms of age and sex as wage workers alone, is found in the centres of capital accumulation. The social relations which then develop in the cities are determined by the results of the struggle between the growing concentration of workers with the bourgeoisie; a struggle in which ideologies are formed and policies framed. The ideology and policy of segregation then is not the result simply of 'magnifying symptoms of disorder'<sup>37</sup> and a

manipulation of public feeling as implied, but a policy composed of essential class concepts and practices; the discipline of workers, the maintenance of plentiful and cheap labour supplies, and a response to the specific demands of workers.

An attempt to separate the legitimate and necessary development of municipal government from its bureaucratic and racialist outgrowth which is implied in Swanson's analysis: 'the abatement of health dangers, slum clearance and housing, the rational spatial and functional development of the community, taxing and licensing for revenue, and the maintenance of the public peace', tends to obscure their inseparable connection with the form of class rule embodied in the state. It is this attempted separation <sup>38</sup> which leads to his implicit acceptance of the complexity of colonial society and a view of the African working class as foreign to the towns, a central theme of the ideologists of segregation:

In South Africa, it must be admitted that municipalities were confronted with an especially acute situation where practically the entire mass of the urban proletariat were not only materially deprived but culturally and ethnically alien.<sup>39</sup>

This view which accepts the settler bourgeoisie's claim that the towns were theirs, detracts substantially from his acknowledgment of the African workers' centrality to the labour process and their resistance to exploitation and racial oppression.

### Counter-attack on wages and labour supply

The questions of urban segregation and the form of labour controls exacted over African workers have to be understood in the context of class struggles of the immediate post Anglo-Boer war. As the British army secured the mining districts in the Transvaal, production was restarted on the basis of average wages of between 30-35s per month for African workers.<sup>40</sup> These wages constituted a substantial reduction from pre-war rates and compared unfavourably with almost every other category of work in South Africa except farm labour. With the establishment of WNLA in 1900 and a maximum average system of wages in the mining industry, a determined effort was made throughout the colonies to reduce African wages. The assault on African workers living standards became formally organized in Natal early in 1902 when a conference was called at Newcastle by the Governor attended by the military, the Secretary of Native Affairs, mining representatives, agricultural and household representatives, and J. Currie representing the stevedoring trade of Durban.<sup>41</sup> There was a simple theme: reduce wages and cut rations. The Governor explained that the aim of the meeting was to discuss the 'abnormal rate of wages at present given to Natal natives both by the Civil and Military Authorities', and how 'we best cut them down' with a suggestion that 'a proper wage be fixed to take effect from a given date'. He had already made a start in reducing the full wage of African workers by withdrawing the 'European rations' supplied by the military where possible, since the men were becoming 'thoroughly demoralised'. He urged the military to return to the staple mealie meal and withdraw the meat ration.

The discussion which followed provided evidence of increased wages in the mines and Durban harbour; underground mine workers wages had risen from 43s 6d to 50s a month and the monthly earnings of togt labour had risen from 30s-35s to 30s-40s a month.<sup>42</sup> While Marks' account of this conference and the whole question of labour supplies at this time tends to a view that it was the agricultural employers who most vigorously demanded wage reductions<sup>43</sup> the level of mine wages in Natal were considerably higher than the 30s-35s average wages/month paid to African miners on the gold mines at this period. Despite the overall agreement on the urgent necessity of reducing wages and rations of workers there were some differences between the approach of different employers; those in 'strategic' sectors such as the docks who tended to act to hoard their labour supplies and argue for a difference between skilled and 'ordinary Kaffir labour', and other employers who were determined to reduce wages to the agreed level of 30s per month.

While Currie, who represented the stevedoring trade at the conference, was less enthusiastic than other employers about a vigorous offensive on African wages and rations which could affect the supply of labour to the docks, he also agreed that the dock employers' strategy should be to reduce wages to the pre-war level of 2s a day. Rather defensively he told the conference that togt workers had never been provided with meat, although they were fed and housed. Their wages had to be compared to the hours

worked 'at all hours and whenever required night and day'.  
 When challenged by Colonel Lawson with the fact that many  
 workers earned as much as 60s and African foremen ('head boys')  
 as much as 90s a month, Currie responded by arguing these  
 workers paid extra tax, were skilled, and were in short supply:

.....these Natives are trained boys. They are the class  
 known as 'Togt Labourers'; they pay a license to the  
 Corporation (license is five shillings per month), come  
 and do their day's work and get what they can from us...  
 They do good work and are really more economical than  
 ordinary raw Kaffirs on monthly wages. We could do with  
 seven thousand boys at the Point but have only got between  
 four and five thousand, and are very shorthanded owing to  
 the present excessive demand.<sup>44</sup>

The defence of the togt system was taken up by the Secretary of  
 Native Affairs, Moor, who praised the labour market in the docks  
 in terms of classical laissez-faire economics. The casual  
 labour system was a 'very useful institution', which benefitted  
 the workers and employers. He even defended workers inducing  
 competition among employers, a notion which relied on skill  
 among a strata of the workers:

These labourers are absolutely free to come and go as they  
 please and so are quite independent. Togt labour is purely  
 a case of supply and demand. If we have one boy in advance  
 of the demand wages will go down, but if we have on boy  
 too little, they will go up. Competition among the owners  
 will tend to put prices up.<sup>45</sup>

This view certainly exaggerates the freedom and ability of the  
 workers to move in and out of the cities and the flexibility of the  
 labour market; wages did tend to remain at a 'conventional' level  
 until a strike or forcible reduction of wages, rather than  
 fluctuating from month to month. The relative 'freedom' of the workers  
 to move from employer to employer was also the freedom of the

employer not to employ any workers (an issue which would only become sharply apparent during the recessions and depression of the economy). Moor's eulogy did not also bring out the employers' and state opposition to a totally flexible labour market: by this time there had already been some tightening up of the workers access to togt badges. Workers were expected first to serve a contract of monthly employment before qualifying for buying a license as a togt worker.

The arguments made about the relative skill of dock workers did force the conference on reducing wages to distinguish between 'ordinary Kaffir labour' and other 'skilled or trained labour' such as mule, ox leaders, or togt workers: these were regarded as necessarily being paid higher rates which were 'not unnecessarily excessive'. This recognition of the relative skills of workers in particular sectors of the economy (an evaluation also applied to the mining industry) did not affect the final outcome of the meeting which determined the norm of wages to be reduced to 30s per month and decided on a strategy of increasing labour supplies. The two responses of employers: repression of wage levels and increasing overall labour supplies were closely linked in the discussion. As Moor argued:

I think any agreement for a general reduction in the rate of native labour is contingent on our obtaining a supply of Portuguese labour. If the natives strike we can then fill in the gaps by the Portuguese, and the natives will see that they are done, and will give in. Otherwise it would mean the importation of enough supplies of Portuguese labour to fill every demand.

This casual rejection of the laissez faire philosophy of a free labour market in favour of repression of strikers backed by the reorganization and mobilization of the industrial reserve army provided the class context of both the advocates<sup>of</sup> free market forces and those of the virtual militarization of labour. Workers did resist these attempts at lower wages. Before the conference was held workers at the remound depot at Pietermaritzburg who were paid 30s a month (the lowest wage level paid by the military) had refused to work in the areas where military operations were taking place unless they were paid 40s. When these workers had returned to the depot those there also struck successfully for a wage rate of 40s.<sup>46</sup> It was resistance like this and in the dock area which was 'the only matter for some time to come to cause any disturbance sufficiently serious to call for the presence of troops'.<sup>47</sup>

While the counterattack on wages was the most forward policy of capital once the military victory of British imperialism seemed assured, the successful reconstitution of the capital relation on the basis of higher levels of exploitation both on the Rand mines and in Natal involved other elements; reorganization of labour supplies, higher rates of taxation, and ideological struggle to reduce African workers to more effective subordination.

#### Togt workers: accommodation and control

The drastic increase in the amount of cargo passing through Durban docks during the war period caused a sharp increase in demand for togt workers. Between 1900-01 the average number of workers registered per month increased by 1,000 (from 2,832 to 3,700) and still did not meet the virtually unlimited and heavy demands for labour

being made by the stevedoring trade. During these boom years of the togt system, wages were edged upwards and the docks attracted what other employers considered a disproportionate number of workers. The rapid concentration of workers in the dock area, their growing resistance to employer and state controls, and their class consciousness, posed fundamental problems for the local bourgeoisie. The crisis in the relations of dominance brought about a response in the demand for urban segregation, specific measures for increasing taxation and social controls, and an increase in racist ideology. Increasing working class resistance to the apparatus of social controls was met with the response by the bourgeoisie of 'demoralization'; strong hostility to the institution of a new and specifically urban culture (most notably in the leita gangs which expressed the confidence of younger workers in the towns) and a yearning for the absolute discipline of the patriarchal 'racial' past. The African petty bourgeoisie responded to the crisis in the relations of domination by disavowing working class action such as strikes and insisting on the need for discipline, but also by protesting against those aspects of state policy which limited property ownership among Africans and requesting the franchise. There is evidence that the African petty bourgeoisie encouraged chauvinism in response to the growing racism of the bourgeoisie, and in this sense were unable to provide leadership to the growing movement of resistance of the workers and peasants of Natal.

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The labour shortage in the docks brought out a dual response from the employers and the local state; a determination to increase labour supplies, and a 'welfare' response of accommodation and

social control. These responses were co-ordinated within the overall necessity of reducing wages and disciplining the working class in areas which affected employment, crucially in the supply of liquor to workers. The disciplining of the workers formed part of the overall strategy of the bourgeoisie in Natal to assert Durban as the principal port of South Africa, an issue which was fought for at length at the political conferences of the time. The most immediate problem for the employers and the state was both the level of wages in the docks and the labour shortage. By 1901 the Durban magistrate reported that the togt workers were totally disregarding the minimum wages laid down in togt regulations and demanding more. 'They, at the present time, demand 2s 6d a day as a rule, whilst at the Point they get as much as 4s.' He blamed the employers for a lack of co-ordinated strategy against the workers, for paying these 'excessive charges', and for permitting African workers to take advantage of the employers disorganization. The togt wage issue was the key to the general question of rising African wages: 'I have no doubt but that the high amounts paid to togt boys largely influence new-comers, who, instead of entering domestic service, become mere jobbers.'<sup>49</sup> The problem was according to him not only a question of disproportions in labour supply between monthly and casual labour but also one of state control of non-wage questions. The central problem was that of accommodation. This 'welfare' response to the problem of a too independent group of workers was seen as the only method of securing round the clock control over togt workers, a 'do-as-you-like class' which slept 'anywhere and everywhere.' His solution was for the

local state to provide accommodation as the collective expression of the interests of all employers, meeting a welfare need and securing detailed control over workers.

Many difficulties would be overcome by meeting this need, but it would be no use building separate quarters unless effective measures are taken to control the occupants. General police supervision is not sufficient where large bodies of men are huddled together.<sup>50</sup>

An almost obsessive concern for control carried through the whole discussion of accommodation for African workers in response to the problems of insufficient labour supply.

The question of accommodation for togt workers was seen as urgent because of the difficulties of maintaining the harbour as the central seaport of South Africa, in competition with the varying claims of Cape Town and Lourenco Marques. A special committee appointed by the Town Council in 1901 which submitted a scheme for the construction of three compounds to accommodate 5,000 togt workers considered the existing regulations inadequate to the problems of carrying out the scheme and providing the detailed controls. A request sent to the Governor to amend the 1874 regulations to increase the Town Council's powers was rejected. The Governor replied he had no powers to grant additions to the law and that it would be necessary to legislate to increase the powers of Town Councils in this area.

A more immediate response to the increasing demands of togt workers was to extend labour recruiting to secure a supply of cheaper labour. The strategy of long range recruiting of labour has to be

related to the general campaign of reducing wages and developing labour supplies as determined at the Newcastle conference. In Durban recruiting of workers was seen as a measure of maintaining the unity of all employers through the local state; a unity which was threatened of being split asunder by the pressure of increased demand for labour by both merchants and stevedoring companies. Natal stevedoring companies scoured the East Coast as far as Suez to get labour at cheaper wages and longer contracts than the togt workers. Soon after the conference which decided to reduce wages stevedoring companies applied for permission to recruit workers from Madagascar and Zanzibar.<sup>52</sup> During the period between 1 August 1902 and 31 December 1903 altogether 5 licenses were granted by the Secretary of Native Affairs for the recruiting of 5,050 workers. There was a tremendous range in the areas from which labour was to be recruited; from Inhambane in Mozambique, Comoro Islands, Zanzibar, Dar-es-Salam, Mombasa, Egypt, to British Central Africa.<sup>53</sup> The conditions of recruitment were a contract of service for two years at a wage of 1s per working day or in some cases 20s per month, a wage about a third of those earned by togt workers.<sup>54</sup>

The enthusiasm with which the employers applied for recruiting licenses and the alacrity with which the Secretary of Native Affairs granted these permits was not matched by the response of workers in the recruiting areas. By 31 December 1903 only 1,000 workers had actually arrived in Durban from Inhambane and Zanzibar. While the original contract at the point of departure was for two years, the

Natal license apparently provided for the return of the worker at the end of the first year unless the worker agreed to extend his service.<sup>55</sup>

TABLE 2.6      LONG DISTANCE RECRUITMENT TO NATAL  
1st August 1902 to 31st December, 1903

Licenses	Source of Supply	Number Authorized	Number Arrived to 31st December, 1903
R. Beningfield & Co.	Inhambane	300	290
A. Corigliano	Zanzibar	150	111
Maby Bros.	"	500	294
Renaud & Ebsworth	Comoro Islands	400	-
F. Staniland	Zanzibar	500	54
"	Mozambique	500	-
R. Renaud	Comoro Islands	200	-
African Boating Company	Zanzibar	100	30
W. Watson & Co.	Zanzibar	100	-
F. Staniland	Dar-es-Salam	500	-
"	Mombasa	500	-
African Boating Company	Zanzibar	100	-
"	"	100	-
F. L. Kruger	British Central Africa	300	-
Chiazzari & Co.	Zanzibar	300	52
R. Beningfield & Co.	Inhambane	100	100
"	"	200	69
F. Staniland	Egypt	200	-
		5,050	1,000

Source: NBBNA, 1903:84.

Contract labour in the docks was not as satisfactory to employers as would have been imagined by the lower wages and extended contracts. While the Suez workers had given 'moderate satisfaction' there were problems with Zanzibar workers. The Suez workers were described as 'adepts at the work in which they were engaged, viz: coaling, but of somewhat independent turn of mind, touchy, exacting and exclusive'. They apparently refused to work with men of other nationality and were quick to enter into disputes with the employers. The Durban magistrate complained they were frequently in court on charges of refusal of duty and assault on the police, and some had been returned. The employers of Zanzibar labour were reportedly 'keenly disappointed' and were not interested in further recruiting by 1904. Despite this lack of interest in recruiting with its added expences, the stevedoring companies tried to extend the contract of their service for as long as possible. Zanzibar workers employed by Maby Brothers were transferred to a contract of service for two years with African Boating Company starting on 1 October 1903. Despite the Durban magistrate describing their treatment and terms as 'of the best' the workers obviously resisted a forcible extension of their contract, and demanded their repatriation. The workers 'adopted an attitude of skulking and malingering, resulting in serious loss and inconvenience to their employers' eventually leading to a strike which forced the company to agree to their being sent home. The workers were all arrested and imprisoned for refusal of duty and the final arrangements for their repatriation were made in

prison.<sup>57</sup> The workers most amenable to employment on long contracts appeared to be those from Portuguese territories, many re-engaging with their employers and building up long service with certain employers.<sup>58</sup> During 1904 the number of workers arriving on long-term contracts dropped rapidly, not only because of the problems employers experienced with imported labour but also because of increased labour supplies in Natal following a disastrous harvest early in 1903.<sup>59</sup> Between January and December 1904 only 223 more contract workers were imported from Egypt and Inhambane which partially compensated for those whose contracts had expired, died or deserted. Many employers cancelled their licenses to recruit. The importation of labour to serve long contracts in the docks did not solve the question of labour supplies for the employers; but this strategy was not meant to provide a complete solution. Rather than aiming for substitution for togt labour the mobilization of a reserve army of labour throughout the East Coast of Africa was (as in the case of Chinese labour on the mines) intended to weaken the resistance of African workers to their oppressive conditions of work and to effect a permanent wage reduction. While employers were organizing labour supplies from outside Natal, a complementary policy was being adopted of providing accommodation for and discipline over togt workers.

The determined assault against the position of relative independence of the togt workers was not the <sup>task</sup> / solely of stevedoring employers but rather of the state and

employers as a whole. The demand for concerted and co-ordinated action against togt workers came from an analysis of disproportions in the overall labour market in Durban; too many workers concentrated in the docks and insufficient supply in commerce and households. The collective strategy which was agreed upon against the workers, which involved administrative, legislative, and co-ordinated employer action, served to reconcile the differing interests of capitalists under the strain of shortage of labour through a further extension of the state. The demand for tighter control over the rapidly increasing numbers of togt workers initially came from commercial companies and merchants soon after the Newcastle agreement to reduce African wages. A petition addressed to the City Council in April 1902 complained bitterly that togt badges were being issued without limit.<sup>60</sup> The petitioners maintained the present togt system was causing the 'greatest hardship' and was 'entirely changing the character of the labour market in Durban to the prejudice of the inhabitants whether householders or business firms'. They claimed that monthly servants were becoming increasingly difficult to hire and that the monthly contract could soon become a thing of the past. The Corporation was squarely blamed for the labour problems of the merchants and householders as it allowed an unrestricted issue of togt badges. The large number of togt workers caused the cost of labour to rise 'enormously and quite unnecessarily' and the workers had become most unreliable. 'Our contention is supported by the fact of the daily and ever increasing applications for togt badges and the number of monthly boys who

who leave monthly service and immediately take on togt badges.' The petitioners begged the Councillors to stop the issue of togt badges, 'the numbers being now greatly in excess of ordinary togt requirements', to raise the cost of togt badges by a large amount to induce monthly service ' which is so much more satisfactory in its character to the burgesses', and to limit the number of togt workers in the future to those for whom night accommodation could be provided.<sup>61</sup> At one level the demands in the petition posed a real clash of interests between merchants and stevedoring companies who had complained at the Newcastle conference that despite the higher wages they were paying there still existed a shortage of labour in the docks. Every worker attracted to work in the docks was a loss to the more rigorously determined monthly employment, and the demands of the togt workers were putting general pressure on the cheap labour system. At another level there still existed a community of interests in maintaining the Durban docks as the prime seaport of South Africa (which implied a joint commitment to keeping wages down) and in opposition to any challenges to oppressive conditions of work. Both stevedoring and commerce formed an interlocking part of the distribution of commodities at the lowest cost and maximum profit both within Natal and to the crucial hinterland. Their differences in relation to labour supplies were real but not insurmountable given their common concerns, and could be resolved at two levels: new strategies as employers to expand labour supplies, and by increasing state intervention on a commonly agreed basis in the area of accommodation and control

over the movement of workers. The debate on exactly what basis state intervention should take place and the cheapest and most effective forms of organization of labour supplies ranged widely over the political issues of the subordination of African workers (including their differentiation from white and Indian workers, and the question of urban segregation) to the issues of the most productive form of regimentation of African workers.

The importation of contract workers from outside Natal by the stevedoring companies can be seen as the initial response to these demands for an end to the competition between stevedoring on one hand and commerce and households on the other. A far more fundamental response to the antagonism between sections of capital was political; taking the form of legislation to strengthen the position of employers, increase taxation particularly of togt workers, and provide controlled welfare in the form of compound accommodation. The legislation required a closer development of the colonial state and the municipality as regular negotiations were initiated by the municipality to frame regulations for the control and accommodation of togt workers. At the request of the Prime Minister the Special Committee consisting of Poynton and Taylor formulated draft by-laws particular to Durban. In March 1902 the Prime Minister forwarded a draft bill for the Council's information which enabled the Town Councils of Pietermaritzburg and Durban to frame regulations for togt labour. The bill met with 'hearty approval' from the Durban Town Council and was passed on to the Legislative Council.<sup>62</sup>

The material questions of labour supply and wages became transformed in the political arena of the Natal Legislative Assembly into the broader issues of segregation in urban areas and reformed relations of domination. The Secretary of Native Affairs introduced the Bill and stressed its urgency in terms of a vision of a settled urban African population in the large towns of South Africa on the basis of residential segregation. He strongly attacked racially mixed residential areas (a common theme of the bourgeoisie at the turn of the century) which he considered would be a drawback to a constant and steady supply of labour; his insistence on urban family housing on a segregated basis was his response to the germ of a modern non-racial proletariat in the backstreets of the centres of accumulation.<sup>63</sup> His views were not actually embodied in the togt law, apart from his insistence on separating African workers from other urban workers, as the legislation basically provided the Town Councils with the power to compel togt workers to live in barracks within the town area.<sup>64</sup>

The amendment introduced by Taylor, who was also a member of the Legislative Council as well as a member of the Special Committee of togt labour, effectively watered down the municipalization of togt labour (the municipal control and accommodation of these workers) by a clause which provided for the licensing of private compounds by the municipality. Taylor argued this amendment was in the interests of Africans and large employers of African labour such as the stevedoring companies, who wanted their labour under direct command of management rather than the indirect control of employers exercised through the local state. Licensing of private compounds would serve the interests of African workers who often worked late into the night and who often did not finish until three or four o'clock

in the morning. He was concerned for their convenience in then having to walk to the municipal compounds which could be a mile away from the docks. Their accommodation in private compounds would be short: only a week or two at a time. If the large employer was licensed to house an African worker 'for a week while he is in his employ' the Town Council could still exercise direct supervision and keep a check on where the workers slept. This rather tentative support for the licensing clause demonstrated Taylor's anxiety for this concession to stevedoring companies who had built private compounds to house their workers.<sup>65</sup> He was acknowledging their power by providing for permissive legislation which would amount to opening a gap through which the uncontrolled masses could flood.<sup>66</sup> In an attempt to stem this tide Taylor proposed a further amendment, which would make it illegal to 'house or harbour' a togt worker outside a compound once the municipal compounds have been constructed. This proposal to provide some form of control over employers did not meet with the approval of other representatives. Taylor defended the clause against those who argued it would make any master open to arrest by arguing it was required to deal with a specific class of people from whom he wanted to protect the togt workers. These persons, 'mainly low class Indians', were 'enticing' the togt workers to sleep on their premises, charging 2s 6d a month and 'demoralising' the workers by supplying them with liquor. 'It is the desire of the Town Council that we should be in a position to relieve these Natives, to get them out of the hands of what I might call landsharks.'<sup>67</sup> The humanitarian gesture was passed into the legislation and formed a part of the general counter-attack of the employers against petty

traders and rentiers in favour of large capitals. Seen in this light, the togt regulations were an important aspect of the bourgeois strategy of intensifying the racial differentiation of the urban working class, petty traders, and small householders. The growing community of interests of Indian petty rentiers and labourers, African labourers escaping from the direct control of employers, and sections of White labour who refused to be reduced to cheap labour but did not turn against African workers, was seen as evidence of 'racial demoralization' in all these groups by the bourgeoisie. The outbreak of plague in November 1902 gave the local state the opportunity of destroying the racially mixed areas of the urban poor, but the determination to root out these areas preceded the bubonic plague epidemic.

While the Town Council and employers waited on the promulgation of the togt law<sup>68</sup> and worked on the detail of the municipal by-laws, action was taken to limit the supply of togt labour. At a meeting of the Town Council in June 1902 it was decided that a committee be appointed to investigate the supply of labour (probably a way of reconciling different interests) and that in the meantime the Superintendent of Police be instructed to see that the Togg Sergeant not issue badges to any workers who were either too young, slightly built, or unhealthy.<sup>69</sup> This curious decision reflects the differing demands for labour; dock employers were not denied strong and healthy workers, while younger and weaker were channeled into monthly employment.

The togt law was more comprehensive than specialized legislation for casual labour; it prescribed strict controls over all African access to town and gave African workers five days to register for employment.<sup>70</sup> All togt workers were required to live in compounds and to work if offered employment at the wages laid down by regulation.<sup>71</sup> The law basically enabled the Town Councils to bring the togt system under direct municipal control, and the municipalities were released from having to make detailed reports on expenditure under the togt law to the colonial government. The togt regulations ceased to be part of the Code of Native Law, and became a section of municipal law, clearing up some potential legal anomalies in a dual legal system of 'absolutist' decrees and acts of Parliament.<sup>72</sup> More important than the Act itself were the regulations made by the Council which were passed at a Special Meeting on 26 October 1903. The most important sections of these by-laws were those increasing the taxation of togt workers, differentiating between various kinds of work, and providing an armoury of controls over accommodation and behaviour of workers.<sup>73</sup> The first aim of the legislation was to squeeze togt workers, to recover part of the wage increases achieved by the workers for the municipal coffers, and simultaneously to pressurize workers into monthly employment. The monthly registration fee was increased from 2s 6d to 5s, and togt workers who were forced by the regulations to live in compounds<sup>74</sup> could be charged up to 5s per month rental.<sup>75</sup> A clause was inserted giving officials more power to deny workers the right to a togt badge<sup>76</sup> for those considered 'physically or mentally unequal to the work of a labourer', diseased, or of

'dissolute habits', which would tend to make togt labour the prime labour market and give officials wide discretion in adjusting labour supplies to the demand for monthly or togt work. Provision was also made for full particulars of workers to be recorded during registration to identify workers.<sup>77</sup> The wage rates laid down in the regulations confirmed the division between labourers and stevedores, dock labour being classified as common store or dock labourer (2s), stevedore inside the Bay (3s), and stevedore outside the Bay (4s). Washermen were also classified as togt workers and paid 3s a day. Work at these wages was made compulsory for togt workers, which meant an attempt to reduce wages which were in many cases higher than the minimum prescribed, and which made bargaining or disputes over wages illegal.<sup>78</sup>

Togt workers were compelled to sleep in either the municipal or licensed private compounds and detailed regulations were laid down for 'orderly behaviour' and 'proper discipline.'<sup>79</sup> The workers were required to return to the compound not later than 9 p.m. unless legitimately employed for night work. A penal disciplinary code was provided against disorderliness, the creation of disturbances, interference with other people, provocative language, 'obscene or indecent acts', and wilful damage of premises.<sup>80</sup> Workers were required to keep themselves and their clothes clean and to 'carry out all directions of the Caretaker.'<sup>81</sup>

Agreed upon in the wake of the outbreak of bubonic plague in 1902-03 which brought many deaths, the municipal by-laws laid down detailed regulations for their maintenance and cleanliness.

The price of direct control over togt workers by the large employers was tight municipal control, at least on paper. The Town Council was to regulate the erection, structure, maintenance, and inspection of private compounds and compel the owners to obey the health regulations.<sup>82</sup> Plans were to be submitted before licenses were granted and a maximum number of lodgers set.<sup>83</sup>

The compounds were to be kept clean and in good repair, swept every day and thoroughly washed twice a week, provide water, lavatories and even baths, be properly ventilated and lighted, and be open to inspection by municipal officials whose orders were to be obeyed.<sup>84</sup> Special mention was made of the problem of infectious diseases: any cases were to be notified to the Medical Officer of Health, and any cleaning and disinfection required by officials was to be complied with.<sup>85</sup> The rigour of the regulations may be seen as a concession on the part of large-scale employers who were well represented on the local council to those who demanded greater supply of monthly workers, but a more useful interpretation would set these regulations in the context of the general offensive against African workers in particular and the drive to 'clean up' housing for the urban poor. The regulations would be accepted by stevedoring companies as their contribution to the general disciplining of the working class required by the potentially uncontrollable concentrations of workers in the town centres. Accommodation problems would be solved on the basis of social welfare policies, e.g. better and healthier sleeping quarters, with the advantage of direct control over the work and leisure activities of the togt workers.

For the workers the togt law was an unambiguously coercive instrument increasing their taxation and particularly the indirect controls of the local state over their lives. A whole new range of criminal offences was created, particularly in the municipal by-laws applying to behaviour in the compounds. The penalties for contravening the togt laws were stepped up considerably from the 1874 regulations. The new law provided for imprisonment with or without hard labour and spare diet for up to three months as against one month with hard labour for first offenders in 1874. Fines were raised to a maximum of £10, about 100 days wages for workers in 1903, as against a maximum of 62 days for first offenders in the previous regulations.<sup>86</sup> The reform in legislation and demands of employers for cheaper and more disciplined labour caused the local state to step up penal sanctions against togt workers. While in 1900 some 88 togt workers were prosecuted in terms of the togt regulations, by 1903, the year of wage reductions in Natal, this figure had increased almost seven times to 594, a figure which was 12 per cent of the average monthly number of togt workers registered in that year.<sup>87</sup> The rising pace of prosecutions was a means by which the local state could intervene in evening out the distribution of labour between togt and monthly employment and simultaneously wear away the resistance of the togt workers to their more oppressive conditions of work and intensified exploitation. The use of the local state against the rising resistance of the togt workers further amplified the circular process of revenue and repression which characterized

the 1874 law. The growing independence of togt workers brought out a response among the bourgeoisie for higher taxation of workers which provided the revenue to expand the police and permit a more vigorous implementation of repressive legislation. In 1903 the income from fines from the offensive mounted under the new togt law equalled the amount paid in for the registration of monthly workers, togt workers, and ricksha pullers.<sup>88</sup> The revenue from the togt system supported a police force of 70 white officers and 400 African policemen, the costs of the repressive force of the state being met completely from the togt account.<sup>89</sup> The police made a tremendously high rate of arrests. Alexander, the Superintendent of the Durban Police, calculated he arrested 6,000 more people in a year than a major industrial city such as Leeds; out of 20,000 Africans, 8,000 were arrested each year. 'That is proportionately more than in any other part of the world that I am aware of'.<sup>90</sup> Most of the crimes were committed against the laws controlling African mobility in the city and those ensuring discipline over workers. In 1903 there were 1,471 arrests in terms of the Vagrant Law for being out after 9 o'clock without a pass or 'being idle and suspicious, or without any visible means', 1,339 arrests for breaches of the peace particularly of members of 'leita' gangs, and 1,234 arrests for drunkenness.<sup>91</sup> Alexander was worried about being able to maintain public order despite the high level of arrests, he protested against Africans being fined rather than imprisoned, and felt there could be serious rioting if the property owners tried to attack leita gangs.<sup>92</sup> The growing resistance of African workers to control during their working hours by employers and leisure activities

and mobility by the police was met by a forceful assertion of the state authority in all areas of life. The crisis in the towns spurred on an urgent discussion of the most effective means of maintaining social control, and produced some of the most vigorous demands for segregation made in the urban situation.

Locations or compounds: the most effective means of social control?

The immediate post-war period in Durban was one of prickly insecurity for the local bourgeoisie. Despite the enactment of the new togt law which gave the municipality added powers to bring this most volatile element in the African working class under control, employers and the local state were very unsure of themselves and at times tended towards panic. Alexander was deeply worried: 'The complaints I receive are so numerous that I dread what will be the result should the Natives at any time defy the authority of the police.'<sup>93</sup> Swanson argues that statements such as these were clearly exaggerated and that Africans never did challenge state authority<sup>94</sup>, but fails to mention the clashes between workers and the police, the strikes, and shrugging off of their subordination in the towns. The local bourgeoisie clearly was worried otherwise there would not have been the formation of vigilante groups and the furious ideological struggle over differing paths to social reform and improved discipline over workers. The arguments which raged between the colonial government and the municipality, between merchants and manufacturers, and between white petty bourgeois movements and state officials encompassed a wide range of political and economic issues. Fundamentally the debate was over

strategies of direct or indirect control over workers, over questions of family or single accommodation (the provision of more compound accommodation as against segregated urban African settlement), continuous and experienced labour from a settled proletariat or the continued dependence on migrant labour subsidized from the reserves, and ideological differences over 'the nature of man' in relation to African workers as sociable and reasonable human beings or instruments of production. In none of these debates did the voice of the African worker intrude, although the African petty bourgeoisie presented its views in newspapers and evidence to commissions of enquiry.

At the centre of ideological debates lay the problem of enforcing control over togt workers. Despite the urgency of the new togt law and the determination to stop togt workers 'sponging' on white households or being 'corrupted' by Indian petty rentiers, the progress in compound construction was not very rapid. In November 1901 the Governor had authorized the expenditure of £9,000 from the Togg Fund to build suitable compounds and the Town Council had decided to erect brick compounds in Bamboo Square to accommodate 2,000 men. The Indian residents of Bamboo Square were to be moved to make way for these barracks and in a state of alarm they petitioned the Council not to force them to move and gave details of their compliance with the various health regulations.<sup>95</sup> The plans were eventually dropped not through respect for this petition but because a wood and iron barracks would accommodate more workers. Finally other plans were considered.<sup>96</sup> Even after the new togt law had been promulgated there were delays in formulating the municipal by-laws, and the whole question of togt accommodation became

involved in the general question of segregation and social control over all African workers.

The controversy over togt accommodation and the pressing need to increase the supply of monthly labour gave Jameson, the Chairman of the Sanitary Committee and manufacturer of preserves and condiments, the opportunity of proposing a location rather than 'scattered barracks' as a comprehensive solution to the problems of labour supply. Jameson was alarmed by the clash between dock workers and the African municipal police at Renaud's premises which indicated a 'spirit of lawlessness', and wrote a memorandum to the Town Council suggesting segregated housing. The togt worker; he wrote, had become 'master of the situation': 'he gets pay, under our pressing needs, entirely out of proportion to the value of his services, he picks and chooses his work, or will not some days work at all,'<sup>97</sup> Unfortunately the 'radical cure' of abolishing togt labour altogether was impossible. The municipal barracks being constructed were essential, but he was opposed to spreading private barracks throughout the town as they were not under police supervision. Scattered barracks which were expensive took up valuable land and with the spread of the business area would have to be removed. The alternative would be to remove the togt workers 'entirely out of the town' by purchasing a site for a village to accommodate the present and future togt workers while leaving some 1,500 men for the more urgent needs of the stevedoring companies.<sup>98</sup> He suggested this drastic action would help to secure for the householder and the merchant continuous monthly labour. The segregation of African workers by

their removal to the outlying areas of the town was seen as a solution to the problem of social control and profitable land use in the central business district. Africans would be moved from an area 'where land is so valuable' to a place where it was cheap, securing the most advantageous position for property owners with room for expansion in the central areas with the promise of higher prices and rents complemented by a steady and cheap labour supply<sup>99</sup>. Radical segregation, that is the complete removal of African workers from the centre of town rather than their isolation in scattered areas within the town, was proposed by Jameson as a solution for the problems of the householder and merchant as their workers would be insulated from the subversive influence of togt workers, and for the stevedoring companies as the workers would come under more effective measures of social control. All property owners would benefit from the 'municipalization' of labour and the setting free of urban land for more profitable use.

Jameson's intervention, coming at a time of insecurity within the local bourgeoisie, started off serious discussions about the possibility of segregating African workers in Durban. Coupled, as the discussion was, with the specific question of control over togt workers, it led to legislation empowering town councils to establish locations for African workers who were not provided with accommodation by their employers.<sup>100</sup> Despite this level of success, those arguing for urban segregation on the basis laid down by Jameson, failed decisively in implementing the removal of African workers to the periphery of the town.<sup>101</sup> Opposed to the 'segregationists' (basically the manufacturer Jameson, the

Superintendent of Police, Alexander, and the Secretary of Native Affairs, Moor) were the 'repressionists' a less articulate group of merchants and professionals who argued that urban locations were expensive, allowed workers' dependents into towns, and would encourage a breakdown in tribal life. The argument centred on a number of related issues around the question of direct employer control over workers against the alternative of more social and indirect controls; both sides were, however, unanimous in their determination to lower wages and increase the discipline over African workers in town. The formation of the Natal Native Reform League, a semi-vigilante association, during this debate strengthened the hand of the repressionists opposed to the restructuring of class relations implied by the segregationists considering creating a permanent African working class in the towns.<sup>102</sup>

The main thrust of the segregationists' argument was that the 'floating Native population' (the togt workers) should be brought under more effective social control and transformed into workers dependent on continuous wage labour. Moor, the Secretary of Native Affairs, argued:

a floating population such as the togt labourers scattered about the town, difficult of supervision, sponging on the citizens, and more or less a nuisance to the whole community, would be better segregated, under control and police supervision, in a place where there would be all the conveniences of sanitation, easy communication with the working centres, and comfortable accommodation.<sup>103</sup>

The provision of urban locations in Cape ports, he had been assured, had brought about a settled African working population continuous service and dependent on wages to support their families. The segregationists argued a settled workforce would provide more labour, and the urban locations would enable all forms of the industrial reserve army of labour to be brought under control, including the 'rascal element'. The segregationists went so far as to attack the compound system as one 'unnatural' to African workers and to present idyllic images of life in segregated locations. Alexander, who had resolutely demanded compounds to control workers in 1898<sup>104</sup> presented a humanitarian concern for the African workers in the backyards of stores:

Between nine p.m. and six a.m. they are shut up like rats in a hole, and cannot get out. This is what I complain of. Some of these back yards are not fit for dogs, let alone human beings.<sup>105</sup>

Moor similarly argued that barracks were foreign to the nature of African workers.<sup>106</sup>

In their natural condition they abhorred huddling together. To be huddled together in barracks was contrary to their nature, their feelings, and their habits. They wished to have a little freedom and fresh air, and to be more or less in touch with nature. He thought it a mistake to try to coerce the natives into a manner of living opposed to their own methods and ideas.<sup>107</sup>

This humane concern for the welfare of African workers was used to justify the most remarkable formulation of 'scientific' segregation which has the ring of modern apartheid in its concern

for the rational deployment of labour power. Jameson made the most advanced statement of utilitarian segregation:

The fact of the man living there (in the location) would entitle him to a ticket to go in for work, and he would not get in on the railway for any other purpose; he would not go into town unless there was a summons by telephone for so many employees, by an employer who said 'I want so many men to-day, send them in.'<sup>108</sup>

Jameson, as did the other segregationists, supported removing African workers from town to improve control over liquor trade and <sup>to</sup> sever the links between African workers and working class Indian people. He also considered a segregated location as a more effective means of controlling workers' resistance, such as the attack on the police by dock workers:

If there was a riot and there were one or two liquor stores in the immediate vicinity, they would be raided, and that would form a focus for any mischief; whereas out there any incipient rebellion, any incipient riot, or any incipient trouble, would not have fuel added to it in the shape of liquor handy, and therefore could soon come under control. The difference between a riot out there and a riot in town would be very great indeed.<sup>109</sup>

Jameson here articulates the strategic insight of the local bourgeoisie, by arguing for the siting of the working class away from the point of production and political co-ordination. A housing scheme which was effectively isolated from these centres and could be policed by a smaller and specialized police force and if necessary surrounded to localize the resistance of African workers was a real advantage to the continued rule of the local bourgeoisie. Despite their perception of the physical controls needed over the African working class, the segregationists

put forward a reformer's zeal in attempting to meet some of the social needs of the workers and the long-sighted needs of capital. The location was presented as the most efficient means of organizing labour supply; even more than the repressionists they argued that African workers should only be allowed in the town to provide labour power. Rather than permitting the massive inflows and outflows of African labour with a huge turn-about to secure a definite amount of labour time, the segregationists argued for a settled African proletariat to provide a measured amount of labour time.<sup>110</sup> Instead of the vagaries of periodic under- and over-supply of labour dependent on the haphazard co-ordination of harvests with the demand for labour, the locations could provide an efficient labour reservoir totally dependent on wage labour serviced by a specialized labour bureaux.

The repressionists answered these persuasive arguments for segregation by arguing against the growth of African families in the towns, <sup>by</sup> pointing out the contradiction between dealing with the togt workers and solving all labour problems, and basically by repeating arguments for cheap government and cheap labour.

The major argument of the repressionists put forward by the mayor, Ellis Brown, a coffee merchant, was that sufficient discipline could not be maintained over African workers unless they were under the direct control of their employers. The irregular demand for labour and hours of work of the stevedoring companies was the illustration used. If the workers were situated

at considerable distances from the harbour there would be dislocation of the work carried on at the Point:

Vessels needed to discharge or coal rapidly; the work was in many cases carried on to 10 p.m. and midnight, and sometimes all through the night. The Corporation would never consider the making of a location unless on the outskirts of the borough, and in no system of barracks or other accommodation which necessitated travelling by rail or tram would it be possible to have communication that could be called upon at all hours. Regular traffic could of course be provided for, but not heavy intermittent traffic at midnight or very early in the mornings - the boys sometimes started work at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. These considerations tended to show the Council that barracks must be provided near the Point. <sup>111</sup>

As an alternative to the location Ellis Brown argued for the provision of barracks in the three main centres of work in Durban. All the repressionists were alarmed at the suggestion that African workers be allowed to bring their wives and families to the towns, and some raised the spectre of 'allowing all the kraal natives to bring all their wives into any town'. Henwood, a military officer involved in transport riding and land speculation, was concerned that there 'would be natives who would never go back to their chiefs'. As many of the other repressionists he did not totally oppose the idea of a location which could be advantageous in the future, but effectively obstructed the segregation policy by raising fundamental problems from the point of view of the local bourgeoisie particularly that of cost. Others, like Champion, a chemist, argued Africans in Natal were 'not yet ripe for the change'. Rather than engage in direct confrontation with the segregationists the general arguments of the repressionists centred on two major weaknesses in the segregationists arguments:

- the necessity of keeping an immediate supply of workers available for work in the docks at any time of the day
- the high cost of the location, not only for the property owners but also for the workers.

When questioned by Ellis who argued the location accommodation could cost the worker up to £2 a month, Jameson 'frankly admitted that his scheme was based on a considerable advance in the present to get fee'. The counter-argument of the repressionists was that the barracks built by the municipality provided a solution to the immediate problem of housing the workers and that a considerable reform and expenditure had taken place in the accommodation of the workers by employers. The merchants simply demanded more police to control African workers. <sup>112</sup> Employers, they argued were responsive to the health and needs of African workers particularly after the eruption of the plague. The short-term solution to the problem of workers' housing was seen as barracks controlled by employers supplemented by municipal barracks; the question of a location was posed as a question for the distant future.

As the post-war political and economic crisis deepened, so the demands of the repressionists became more frantic and a semi-vigilante group of politicians and local property owners took form with the endorsement of the local magistrate, J. Stuart. This period is marked by a pronounced increase in racism in the local bourgeoisie, and a decisive attack on the non-wage aspects of the capital relation; liquor supplies, petty trading, and African women. The counter-revolution set in motion during

these years eventually resulted in the repression of the Bambata rebellion which left thousands dead and finally the Native Affairs Department in Durban as a specialized form of control over African workers. The language of the bourgeoisie became more formally racist: Stuart, for example, demanded that the status of Africans should be 'unequivocally subordinate to that of the ruling race, a race immeasurably ahead both in achievement and in refinement'.<sup>113</sup>

The articulation of racism was closely immeshed in the class consciousness of the local bourgeoisie, aware of the stratification within each racial group but determined to submerge class antagonism within a cultural and racial order. 'The question is not one of class against class, but of civilization against barbarianism, enlightenment against ignorance.'<sup>114</sup> In this context, state policy concentrated on increasing racial differentiation between white, Indian, and African people. In an onslaught against growing social interaction between the urban poor of many races which in some cases had resulted in cohabitation between black and white, the Natal Legislative Assembly outlawed extra-marital intercourse for gain or love between white women and African, Asian, or Coloured men. Harsh penalties were laid down: two years imprisonment for women and twenty-five years for men!<sup>115</sup> Racial legislation of this kind was essential to curb any tendencies towards the 'Latin Americanization' of social relations, the formation of mixed residential areas with a cultural tradition subversive of the protestant ethic of the bourgeoisie. Measures of this kind were also crucial to the reproduction of a white working class as a definite stratum within the working class; dependent politically on the radically racist white petty bourgeoisie<sup>116</sup> and contemptuous of working class solidarity.

The response of employers and the state to the growing confidence of African workers in the towns in the form of wage reduction and higher taxation was considerably strengthened and widened by the protests of the white petty bourgeoisie. The Natal Native Reform League which was formed in October 1904 campaigned on a whole range of issues, most dramatically for the removal of Africans from the footpaths, but also for tougher state measures such as passports and character references for African workers. Members of the League such as the Chairman, Dr. Campbell, excited racist feelings as the basis for 'reforms'. African men were being allowed into the bedrooms by white women, girls were being nursed by African male domestics, and the master/servant relationship generally was becoming lax. H. Stuart favoured segregation as a solution to the growing indiscipline of African workers, in his language 'they would have to drive the natives from the towns'. He advocated that all Africans should be required to carry a passport with a character reference, and that locations should be laid out miles out of the town. Other members of the League favoured even more drastic measures 'even to the extent of military discipline', to exclude Africans from pavements, and to demand 'certificates of efficiency' from African work-seekers.<sup>117</sup> For many the question of docile and fluid supply of African labour was 'the root of the whole matter'. Dr. Campbell, for instance, made a forthright attack on the 'extreme diffidence' with which the local authorities had dealt with the togt workers defiance of the new togt law. For him this symbolized the way in which the authority of

employers and the state was being undermined by an insubordinate African working class. The problem lay in the governing authorities who were opposed to any interference with the 'leisured loafing' of African workers and who feared African resistance to increased repression and taxation:

Togt barracks had been built for the natives, for sanitary and other reasons. The law said he must inhabit these dwelling places, the native said he would rather not, and he defied the law - and there the matter ended.

Unless there was a concerted drive against African people in the towns he saw there was the danger of the state regulations becoming irrelevant and the local state unable to carry out the collective measures decided on by the bourgeoisie. In an alarmist fashion, Campbell prophesized the period of neutrality would be followed by one 'when the native would attempt to impose his will upon us.'<sup>118</sup> The whole tenor of the Natal Native Reform League was towards stricter enforcement of the social mores making up capitalist relationships, in the household, the streets, in master/servant contracts, and demands for more definite state intervention to strengthen property owners and employers.

In response to the clamour of the white petty bourgeoisie, the ideologists of the colonial bureaucracy developed even further racism as a bridge between all sections of the ruling class and provided a far more comprehensive view of the uneasy social relationships in the countryside and towns. In an extraordinarily sweeping survey of the crisis of capital in all its aspects, urban and rural, social and political, J. Stuart the First Assistant Magistrate of Durban, made a report on 'the growth of lawlessness'

in Durban. In this report he stressed the urgent need for a special department of state and anthropological research to make a precise investigation into the 'affairs' of African people.<sup>119</sup> Fundamental to the crisis in social relations was the 'constant, uninterrupted contact' between all classes of whites and the African population as a result of 'multifarious commercial tendencies' which were acting to transform African 'ancient habits and customs, their beliefs and modes of living.'<sup>120</sup> Stuart projected the most radical pessimism: a direct relationship between insubordination in the towns and disruption in traditional social life in the countryside, African women 'subject to little or no control', and the rapid spread of venereal disease.<sup>121</sup> The growth of commodity relations in the countryside was threatening to dissolve traditional life and Africans 'should not be accorded a liberty, a cruel liberty, which...is slowly but surely bringing about their own annihilation.'<sup>122</sup> Instead of advocating liberalization which would hasten the disintegration of ancient modes of life, Stuart favoured the reform of harsher punishment:

The most effective way of ruling Native youth is undoubtedly by means of moderate corporal punishment. In former days the most usual penalty for boys was flogging. So it should be with us, for only in that way can savages be taught to respect and to obey.<sup>123</sup>

Lashes and imprisonment should be the means of punishing 'the more serious cases of open defiance', Africans using footpaths should be brought under the discipline of the borough police, but not removed by racial proclamation, while Africans should not be allowed to ride on trams. The justification for these racist measures was to reinforce the temporary nature of African presence

in towns, encouraging the migratory nature of African labour and the repelling force of the state as against the views of those favouring steady and continuous labour from a location. In a statement which welds the concept of African workers as units of labour-power with their national oppression Stuart argued:

They should, for many years to come, be regarded as mere visitors to the town; as such, though they do not contribute to the municipal rates, and therefore have no right to share the same privileges that regular citizens do...Permanent residence in town should, as far as the great majority are concerned, be distinctly discouraged.<sup>124</sup>

Stuart spoke for those who sought to limit the effects of proletarianization, to maintain a high turnover of labour to limit the growth of class consciousness, and to attack the petty trading which sprung up to provide the African workers with liquor and food. The ideological assault launched against the permanence of African workers in the city and attempted to conceptualize the 'endless and enormous power of discipline' of tribal life<sup>125</sup> in the employment of the capitalist state. The whole thrust of collective action by white property owners carried out by the state was towards the reduction of the price of labour power. The two goals of state policy were then to develop a more intelligent and repressive state apparatus, and to reproduce a highly fluid reserve army of labour to sweep aside the growing class consciousness of workers in crucial sectors. These two aspects of the state were integral to each other; the only means of controlling the massive flux of workers in Durban

was through the full development of the means of repression. The segregationists lost the battle to form a permanent Black working class under control of the municipality in segregated urban areas. The alternative of acculturation of the mass of African workers to an acceptance of a passive role as proletarians living and working under more social than direct state control, the question raised by the segregationists in an apparently 'advanced' position of capital, was rejected as the crisis deepened and the flexibility of capitalist strategy was reduced by the limits of state expenditure and urban land policy.

The emerging nationalist movement among the intelligensia and well-to-do peasantry was not responsive to the struggles of African workers in the towns against the new levels of exploitation and racial oppression planned by the local bourgeoisie. The Natal Native Congress brought into being through the co-operation of the advocate G. H. Hulett and educated Christian Africans operated in Hulett's words as a 'safety valve of public feeling' during the war.<sup>126</sup> Martin Luthuli, a farmer and Vice-Chairman of the NNC presented its policy as the 'welfare of the Native population under the Government', concerned with the franchise, buying land, trading in the towns, and education.<sup>127</sup> The NNC was limited to Christian Africans and had no relationship with the chiefs.<sup>128</sup> Composed basically of well-to-do African peasants closely connected to the mission stations, the NNC was unable to escape from a puritanical concern for honest labour and public morality. The politically conscious African petty bourgeoisie had aspirations to speak for 'the masses',<sup>129</sup> 'the nation...for the black people'; but from its predominantly rural base had no conception of

the popular demands of African workers and African women in the towns. It repudiated absolutely the strike weapon as a means of securing higher wages and combatting an increasingly oppressive state and was unable to reflect the increasingly restive mood of the African masses. While they protested against isibalo as a form of conscripted labour and opposed the chiefs as oppressive and 'greedy', Luthuli used the language of the bourgeoisie in talking of 'raw Natives',<sup>130</sup> and Radebe supported compulsion to labour: 'It should be a crime to see a man lounging about and going about the hills playing a concertina as many are doing now'!<sup>131</sup> As a Christian petty bourgeois loyal to the established Churches Radebe violently opposed the Ethiopian movement which campaigned to break the links with these churches because of the growth of white racism. Possibly fearing its growing influence as a component of the ideology of resistance Radebe underplayed its significance but demanded measures to stamp it out as a 'seditious' movement: 'I would simply get them out of the country'.<sup>132</sup> Unable to disentangle themselves from the religious orthodoxy of the missionaries or a close relationship with sympathetic white professionals, the African political leadership compromised themselves by adopting many of the positions of the local bourgeoisie and rejecting any concept of mass resistance to state policies outside of their leadership. By supporting prohibition, arguing for the

universal obligation to labour, and basically concerned about land and trading rights, the African petty bourgeoisie far from seeking to advance resistance to an increasingly oppressive state rather sought out a niche within the social and racial structuring of colonial society. They contributed to the liberating of the African people from oppressive conditions only to the extent of arguing for qualified franchise (tentative although this suggestion was), and attacking the chiefs for commanding isibalo, arbitrarily and nepotistically distributing land, and for being determined to maintain the petty despotism enshrined in colonial law.<sup>133</sup> None of these attitudes were revolutionary, nor necessarily an advance on the ideology of the missionaries on whom many of the petty bourgeoisie were closely dependent. Their search for reforms and amelioration of oppressive conditions from the local bourgeoisie was out of temper with the growing resistance of African workers and peasants in the post-war depression.

#### Capitalist crisis and the Bambata uprising

Following the South African war the coastal areas experienced a short burst of prosperity. Capital flowed in resulting in a large expansion of bank credit, and the stream of white immigrants led to widespread land speculation. The whole period was marked by the rapid growth of capitalist agriculture (particularly wattle and dairy farming which supplemented the sugar plantations), and after some interruption, the quick growth of coal mining.<sup>134</sup> The increased income from

peasant production and wage labour brought about by military expenditure soon fell off from 1902.<sup>135</sup> After having been brought into the cash nexus at an accelerated rate, the African peasantry both in the reserves and on private land carried the burden of capitalist expansion. The expansion of the railway system, the largest item of expenditure on public services in Natal, which secured the widest expansion of commodity relations, also brought about the decline in peasant agriculture by lowering the price of grain in remote areas. The continued expenditure on extension of the railways and on capitalist agriculture and mining was maintained at a high level during the post-war depression which was described as 'one of the severest, and undoubtedly the most prolonged depression South Africa had experienced during the past one hundred years.'<sup>136</sup> Despite this crisis, the nascent state in Natal was determined to maintain the growth of the railways, and between 1900/1 and 1909/10 over four hundred miles of new lines were built and the public debt rose to £23 million.<sup>137</sup> As state revenue from consumption taxes and licenses and business taxes declined rapidly from 1904/5 while revenue from import duties remained static, the state searched for new sources of revenue.<sup>138</sup> After dismissing the alternatives of income or land tax, the local bourgeoisie decided upon a head or poll tax of £1 upon all adult males in August 1905. This measure was specifically designed to place the burden of the crisis on the shoulders of the African masses, in particular the young, unmarried men.<sup>139</sup> Given the imperative of the expansion of capital and the political constitution of the state, it was the

only measure which would avoid property owners from having to sacrifice some of their gains during the war.

The imposition of the poll tax came at a time when the working population had suffered a considerable decline in living standards. Awakened to a heightened political life during the war through migration and work in the towns, the African workers led the resistance to the new tax, although the decisive battles against the state took place in the countryside. The togt workers who had fought against the local state siphoning off their wages through registration fees and had resisted theirforced accommodation in compounds were hardened to attempts by the state to indirectly reduce their wages through taxation. James Stuart who convened meetings of African workers towards the end of 1905 to announce the new tax, met with strong resistance. He reported that a refusal to pay the tax could be expected and the state would have to exert force to squeeze the cash from Africans who regarded the tax as oppressive.<sup>140</sup> These workers had no encouragement from Dube, the editor of Ilanga lase Natal and later the President of the South African Native National Congress. After these turbulent meetings addressed by Stuart he wrote:

'...If the Ilanga does find fault with this (poll) Tax, it has to find more fault with the remarks made by those natives in Durban,who said they would not pay the money. Such contemptuous speech to the Government is not right....It is well that the natives should learn to be more respectful.'<sup>141</sup>

As the resistance grew in the countryside as the magistrates attempted to collect the tax from the end of January and the beginning of February 1906, Dube became more equivocal, attempting

to build on the desperate resistance of the people to argue for a deputation to intercede with the Imperial government. The argument of the black petty bourgeoisie during the uprising was to reject violent resistance and armed warfare as futile and to pose instead the alternatives of education and political organization. While it was formally correct to argue that the 'primary' stage of resistance to imperialism was coming to an end throughout Africa and that new methods of struggle were needed, the black petty bourgeoisie deeply imbued with Christian and constitutionalist views posed a reformist conception of political action to the insurgents' consciousness of the need to attack state power. Even the 'interceding' strategy proposed by Ilanga which brought Dube a reprimand from the Governor did not mention the poll tax as one of the grievances to be put before the British government.<sup>142</sup> Faced by the alternative of identifying himself completely with the mass resistance to the poll tax, Dube became apologetic, retracted his words and in the months during which the brutal extermination of the resistance was taking place in the countryside was commended by the Governor in a communication to the Secretary of State for aiding the government in preventing the spread of rebellion.<sup>143</sup> By holding aloof from the mass resistance to the poll tax and arguing against the armed uprising as a method of struggle, the black petty bourgeoisie acted to neutralize the ideological currents of resistance and provided partial justification for state action. Mass armed resistance, it could have been argued, would only worsen the situation of the people as a whole.

Interpretations of the Bambata uprising have tended to describe the influence of Ethiopianism and the ideology of 'Africa

for the Africans' within the mass resistance as part of the 'agitator theory' of the ruling class. The contrary position is argued by Marks who concludes that the 'disturbances were basically tribal in origin and organization.'<sup>144</sup> From our analysis of the growing class consciousness of African workers and the pauperization of the African peasantry, the Bambata uprising should be linked much more closely to the rising political consciousness of the black masses. Bambata, who became the leader of the resistance which began as a series of incidents and demonstrations and ended with a frontal attack on the army, although a hereditary chief, represented new elements of political leadership. Before taking the field of action against the state he had been involved in numerous court actions mainly over his failure to pay rent to local white farmers, and he was heavily in debt. Despite his chiefly position, Bambata was distinguished from other petty despots by his lack of discipline on his followers and his controversial marriage. These attributes showed his lack of concern in maintaining a traditional order in his area and his responsiveness to militant action from the younger men. A man of considerable courage, even audacity, he represented the deep sentiments of resistance to racial oppression and the imposition of the capitalist state.

Although there was vocal criticism of the poll tax by African workers in the towns, the first confrontations with the state over the issue took place in the countryside. After a series of incidents in which assemblies of people with their chiefs refused to pay the tax, martial law was declared, and all forms of

resistance brutally suppressed. When two white policemen were killed in a fray near Byrnetown which involved two artisan Ethiopians, summary trials were held and the accused shot before assembled Africans and chiefs.<sup>145</sup> The Natal Field Forces under the command of the viciously racist Colonel Duncan McKenzie swept through the Midlands and then the coastal areas demanding the chiefs hand over defiant men and pledge loyalty to the state. In the Mapumulo division, an area which had one of the highest proportion of men in wage labour (see diagram) and where there was widespread resistance to the poll tax a 'scorched earth' policy was adopted with the troops marching through locations, burning crops and kraals, confiscating cattle, deposing and imprisoning chiefs. The resistance which followed became associated with Bambatha's leadership, developing from a first phase of guerilla warfare to a disastrous frontal attack on the Natal troops armed with Maxim guns. As the main body of resistance gathered in June 1906 large numbers of workers deserted from employment in Durban to supplement the 3-4,000 men gathered in the Mapumulo area. More than 1,000 dockers, about 500 domestic workers, a number of rickshaw-pullers, and most importantly about 40 per cent of the African Borough Police joined this group in armed warfare with the Natal Field Forces.<sup>146</sup> Attracted by the prospect of dealing a blow to the state which oppressed them, the men were decimated by the advanced tactics and weaponry of the Natal troops. By the time the uprising had been completely suppressed between 3-4,000 Africans had been killed, 7,000 imprisoned, and many thousands

severely lashed.<sup>147</sup> The pacification of the countryside was carried out by a policy of terror; in some areas for months no one could be found to bury the dead, and in Mapumulo, Ndwedwe, and Lower Tugela (important areas of labour supply to Durban) well over 30,000 people were without shelter after their huts had been destroyed.

The uprising which took the form of demonstrations, guerilla attacks and finally culminated in unco-ordinated massing of insurgents in the heart of the reserves of Zululand cannot simply be described as a form of resistance to conquest (the overall political control of Zululand under the Natal state was achieved by its incorporation in 1897 after ten years of direct Imperial rule) but as a series of armed actions by the industrial reserve army of labour: the peasants, unemployed and workers of Natal. The strongest support for an armed uprising certainly came from the pauperized peasantry (the well-to-do Christian peasantry remained neutral or supported the suppression) and the workers in the towns fighting the struggle in the countryside.<sup>148</sup> The terrain of resistance moved from the towns where the ruling class felt most vulnerable, faced with large concentrations of workers restive under the new levels of exploitation, to the countryside where the growing political consciousness of the workers and their adoption of new techniques of struggles (strikes, attacks on the police, legal action by workers) was subordinated to the traditional methods of massed attack. The black petty bourgeoisie, which condemned the use of force by workers in the towns, was reduced to wringing its hands

and making calls for the uprising to come to an end. The most advanced ideology of resistance, the Africanism espoused by the Ethiopian movement was certainly not xenophobic and was able to draw together Africans from disparate classes, clans, and tribes, against a state enforcing national oppression. Its definite limits were its 'reactive' nature, a response to white racism, which led to a conception of defence of 'hearth and home' rather than the forward movement of the workers in the mining, commercial, industrial, and political centres. Despite the devastating eradication of all resistance in the countryside, the uprisings of 1906 marked a definite advance in political consciousness by traditionalists, Ethiopians, pauperized peasants, and the workers that their aspirations could only be accomplished by an armed uprising. The contrary conclusion of the black petty bourgeoisie was that armed struggle was obsolete and led to devastating losses and that the modern forms of political organization were constitutionalist and reformist. These two strands of thought were held in uneasy alliance in resistance to the racial state, the latter conclusion being embodied until 1960 in African nationalism led by the black intelligensia, religious leaders, and well-to-do peasantry.

#### The origins of the Durban system

The overwhelming victory of the local bourgeoisie over the African masses in the rural areas cleared the way for new forms of class rule in the towns. The final form of government in Durban over African workers was, however, not a planned

extension of the local state but rather a series of responses to the post-war crisis which enabled the form of subordination over African workers to be reformed to become a systematic set of social relationships reproduced by a specialized state bureaucracy. While the primary thrust of the local bourgeoisie was against the black working class (isolating black workers from organized and militant white workers, collectively acting to reduce wages, and forcing black workers into barracks under the direct control of employers and the local state), another crucial aspect of the post-war counter-offensive was action against women and petty trading. The growth of petty trading by Africans in the towns tended to consolidate working class communities outside the barracks and as importantly provided African workers with a plentiful liquor and cannabis supply, thus loosening the general control over workers after work. The influx of African women, although posed in terms of prostitution, venereal disease, and public morality, threatened the drive to force all African workers into barracks by posing the alternative of working class households in the towns. Since the two issues of petty trading and African women in town were closely linked as the women were traditionally the brewers in African society, the attacks on both were aimed at averting the formation of a permanent African working class, not in a distant segregated townships, but in the "low" central business areas not desired by the commercial bourgeoisie.

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While the state was involved in tentative measures to bring the 'informal sector' under control or eliminate it entirely before

the decisive suppression of working class and peasant resistance represented by the aftermath of the Bambatha rebellion, the strong measures adopted by the Durban municipality were part of a 'sanitation' drive resulting in the eventual achievement of a beer monopoly. In his evidence to SANAC, Alexander, the Superintendent of the Durban Police, said there were about seventy beer sellers in Durban in 1904 earning about £1 a day, considerably more than the highest wages paid to African workers. African workers were spending their wages on clothes, food, and beer rather than taking it back to their families. More than that, the beer brewing was rapidly becoming more alcoholic and getting up to the strength of 'isitshimeyana', a form of home-brewed spirits. Already the police were taking action against the beer sellers on the basis that the liquor exceeded two per cent, the level at which excise tax was exacted. In one day Alexander had fifteen men convicted.<sup>151</sup> Apparently action taken by the municipal police had pushed some of the brewing outside the borough boundaries and the Natal Police were called in to suppress this development. The attack on liquor outlets was accompanied by sets of regulations which strengthened the hand of white commerce. The workers accommodated in the new Point barracks were not allowed to cook their own food; catering arrangements for the 2,000 toggt workers were handed out to tender. In justification Alexander argued: 'Do you think that 2,000 men are going to have 2,000 kettles, and each cook for himself, and each have a frying pan?' The municipality had converted an old barrack into an 'eating house' and granted a contract to a white caterer for £600 a year. With the decrease in employment at the

Point during the post-war crisis, this caterer was finding it difficult to pay his way.<sup>152</sup> It was doubtless with the interests of large-scale commerce and defence of their centralization of services under municipal control that the police acted so severely against petty traders.

An article appearing in the Natal Advertiser towards the end of 1904 signalled an offensive against African petty traders and Indian landowners in violently racist language. The article headed 'The Kafir Market, filth and food' wrote of the stench in the Grey Street area of Durban. 'As one passes along many of the streets one's nostrils are assailed by stale, pungent odours, which cause one to catch the breath until the reeking area is passed.' The attack on petty trading was couched in the language of racism and segregation, defining the town and its industries built by black and white labour as 'European' in a formulation very similar to that made by Stallard in 1921 in his attack on the permanency and urban rights of the black working class, and on the black petty bourgeoisie:

Durban is a European, not a native or an Indian town. Indians and natives are allowed in it by reason of their usefulness as labourers, scavengers and workers at any work at which the white man does not care to soil his fingers.

From this view which includes an important role for the white working class there was no position at all for Indian or African petty traders. The proper solution to the problem suggested by the anonymous contributor, was a segregated location for African people, and a determined campaign to rid the town of the 'nuisance' of an African market. The African traders were influenced by

Indian landowners to become 'extremely filthy' and their activities were 'a menace to the health of all the neighbourhood'. The market area which was used both by Indian and African traders, numbering sixty, was condemned out of hand. During the day about 40 beer barrels and 25 eating stalls were in operation making, according to the correspondent, the ground saturated with the leavings of thousands of meals:

Open fires, of which more than 75 pots and cooking utensils simmer daily, and burning regularly while day lasts, and in the meantime there is the perpetual and indiscriminate sprawling of native smokers of msangwa who have nothing better to do.

The Council was apparently determined to take action against the Indian landowner who allowed this market on his land without providing drainage, and at a Council meeting it was even suggested that an interdict should be sought to 'put the beer and food sellers out of the way of trade.'<sup>153</sup> The report presaged the tentative manoeuvrings of the local bourgeoisie, wary of committing the municipality to planned urban segregation and meeting the expenses of a location away from the city centre, but also determined to eliminate the bases for non-racial urban communities which undermined the 'barracks strategy'.

Any expansion of petty trading obviously threatened the municipal 'eating house' and competed with commercial interests. Before engaging in a determined struggle to eliminate African trading, the Natal state acted to increase pressure on the petty traders. The Stamps and Licenses Act of 1905 imposed a £5 licence fee on all African eating houses and the municipality expanded its own catering establishments.<sup>154</sup> These measures increased revenue

for the municipality as that from the taxation of togt workers declined, siphoning off from the wages of African workers as a whole the means for their repression and administrative control. Once the food stalls had been brought under municipal control, the major issue of liquor supply could be broached, not simply as a means of increasing municipal revenue (although this was the dominant concern during the post-war depression) but also as a means of bringing the whole series of subordinate relationships into alignment. The problem of African workers refusing to be squeezed into the barracks, attracted by a specifically urban life of new social relationships with people of other classes and races, could be partly solved by a forthright attack on areas where an alternative life was possible. The fact that African women could also only make an independent existence in the towns on the basis of liquor brewing was also a component of official thought and strongly resisted.

The proposal that the municipality should monopolize beer brewing and distribution was not as much a sudden departure from a previously laissez faire policy, as the liquor outlets had always been subjected to police harassment, but a necessary aspect of keeping the value of labour power at its lowest by reproducing a system of migrant labour. In contrast to urban workers having a constantly expanding range of needs and complete dependence on wage labour, the value of labour power of migrant workers could be reduced by maintaining their subsidy to wage labour from homestead production. Between 1906 and 1908 a struggle took place between the municipality and the colonial state, and the liquor brewers. The

issue of control over liquor became a matter of some contention, not only at the obvious level of the municipality and brewers, but also stimulated a considerable controversy within the ruling class. The missionaries, teetotal groups, and sections of the black petty bourgeoisie argued for complete prohibition (a view identical to that of the Chamber of Mines), while the municipality and those who claimed insight into African customs argued for a beer monopoly. All were united, however, on one theme; that Africans should not be allowed free access to liquor of any kind.<sup>155</sup> The divisions within the ruling class over the precise form of control over liquor supply delayed the implementation of a formal municipal beer monopoly for some time, as the brewers struggled for existence. When the police took action to close all liquor outlets selling to Africans, the vendors *appealed* to the Supreme Court in Natal and won judgment against the authorities. This decision apparently caused a frantic mood in which legislation establishing a municipal beer monopoly was enacted.<sup>156</sup> The by-laws applying to Durban in terms of the Native Beer Act of 1908 were only promulgated late in the year, but did mark an important victory for the municipality. African women would not be allowed to sell or supply beer which was only to be manufactured and sold at municipal premises in Victoria and Bell Street.<sup>157</sup> Any contravention of the regulations would result in a fine of up to £20 or imprisonment with or without hard labour for up to six months, harsh penalties which showed the determination of the bourgeoisie to build a powerful local state in the wake of defeats of the African people in the countryside.

The provision of eating houses and installation of a beer monopoly by the municipality was not so much a sudden extension of the local state into new areas, as a similar enterprise to the provision of electricity, tramways, and telephones in the late nineteenth century. This development of 'municipal socialism' parallel to the growth of Fabianism and municipal public services in Britain, was not a service for the African labourers, who resisted further control and exploitation, but a public service for property owners in terms of cheap labour. By the local state appropriating production and distribution of food and drink, the necessities of the reproduction of labour power, it became integrally involved in productive as well as coercive relations with the mass of black workers. The togt fees which were such a naked display of the state drawing revenue from the wages of African workers to provide the means of repression became displaced by the more indirect and masked forms of collecting revenue. The explicit nature of class rule characteristic of the togt regulation period became supplanted by the more developed strains of paternalism which made a real contribution to the maintenance of migrant labour at a time when many important areas of labour supply had been devastated during the repression.\* The food and beer industries which were so important in the early phases of capital accumulation in Britain, the distribution of which also became a major source of livelihood for the petty bourgeoisie, became under municipal control the source

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\*This point will be expanded on in discussion of municipal policy in the post world war I period.

of revenue for a vastly expanded state bureaucracy.<sup>158</sup> From the total wages of African workers employed in the town, the local state secured an increasing proportion for professional managers, clerks, police, and large strata of petty officialdom. Increasingly the functions of the local state in relation to the black working class became removed from the direct rule of the openly coercive state, the police, to the more sophisticated rule of fluent linguists and specialists who stressed the welfare aspects of segregation.

Municipal control over food and beer eliminated almost completely the material basis for a fairly independent urban black petty bourgeoisie. The growth of beer brewing within the town did undoubtedly provide such a basis before the introduction of the beer monopoly. Shortly before this was introduced the police reported there were 112 'beer dens' employing 200 people and producing 4,000 gallons a weekend. The extent to which the beer trade offered a precarious but profitable livelihood is illustrated by the following example. One of the breweries closed down by the police was a five-room house employing twenty women and thirteen men using fifty-seven casks, drums, and paraffin tins.<sup>159</sup>

Enterprise on this scale obviously provided income for a fairly wealthy independent life by African traders possibly rivalling the income of the white petty bourgeoisie. Since commercial capital did not want to dirty its hands in plying the messy trade of food and drink for the black working class, it was quite satisfied to lose this section of the market to the municipality in

exchange for state efforts to cheapen labour power. While the beer monopoly was introduced with the fervour of municipal reform, a sharp struggle took place between the brewers and the municipality before the monopoly was achieved. When the police began to take systematic action against beer outlets in a campaign to suppress drunkenness, the vendors appealed to the Native High Court in 1907. This Court decided on appeal that utshwala was not an intoxicating liquor within the meaning of the Liquor Act and that the sale could not be restricted. 'From 1907 until the beginning of 1909 utshwala was brewed by everybody and anybody who wanted it in Durban without control or restriction'.<sup>160</sup> The Native Beer Act of 1908 was designed to bring an abrupt end to the legality of beer brewing by Africans in the towns of Natal, and was a piece of racial legislation which particularly accentuated the oppression of African women.

While it cannot be argued that the local bourgeoisie followed a carefully formulated plan in introducing the beer monopoly as a means of providing the revenue for a municipal department of control over African workers, the latter developed surprisingly rapidly once the competition from petty brewers had been eliminated. Originally the manufacture and sale of beer was placed in the hands of the Chief Constable <sup>who took</sup> the anomalous position of suppressor of the now illegal beer trade, arrestor of the drunken, and municipal brewer. As this contradiction became more evident with public criticism, the municipal bureaucracy became more refined. A new department was established in 1910 to control the

manufacture and sale of beer headed by an official with the clumsy title of 'Superintendent of Native Eating Houses and Native Brewery'. As the welfare aspects of this new system of taxation became developed with an African Women's Hostel in 1911, the foundations of the bureaucracy in the beer trade were obscured with the more benevolent title of the 'Municipal Native Administration Department'. Experts in brewery machinery were consulted, a new brewery was built, and the eating houses extended. <sup>161</sup> This lucrative source of revenue depended on constant police suppression of independent brewing (the brewing of utshwala was only brought under control by an 'unusual amount of work' on the part of the police in July 1909) which in turn required further expenditure on the police force completing the cycle of taxation-police suppression - increased revenue for police so characteristic of the togt regulations. <sup>162</sup> The money flowing in from beer sales compensated for the decline in income to the togt fund which resulted from the post-war depression. Both these sources of income were further augmented by the municipality charging for passes issued to Africans in 1910. The beer monopoly brought in considerable revenue for the municipality and provided the material base for the system of control adopted by the municipality over African workers. After an initial investment in brewing plant had been made the income was quite substantial.

TABLE 2.7.            INCOME TO THE BEER ACCOUNT (£)

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1909	4,502
1910	14,116
1911	20,370
1912	24,201

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Compiled from the Mayor's Minutes of these years.

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The beer monopoly had the advantage of obscuring the form of class oppression by drawing revenue from the expenditure of African workers on the necessities of life rather than the more open extraction of tax from the registration of togt workers. Politically it was posed as a voluntary system as workers were not compelled to drink beer. It also gave off the useful by products of paternalistic benefits such as the municipal eating houses, the hostel for African women, and the wage remittance agency for African workers. By funding a state apparatus more from monopoly profits rather than direct taxation of African workers or from the general revenue gathered from property owners, the Durban municipality made a definite advance in the material and ideological development of class rule in South Africa. African workers maintained the specialised bureaucracy which fed off their wages, and the 'benefits' of the Native Administration Department eliminated independent economic activity by the African petty bourgeoisie (the eating houses and beer monopoly) or severely limited family life and brought African women under close supervision (the hostel).

The institution of a remittance agency provides a good example of the way in which the Native Administration Department reinforced migrant labour and made it more efficient, thus limiting the workers' opportunity to settle in the town. The agency which remitted wages to relatives in the countryside was instituted in 1907 allowing the Magistrates to pay out cash to the workers' families. No charges were made for this service which gradually grew in importance until in 1910 £1,110 16s 7d was remitted. The remittance enabled kraal taxes to be paid and 'the Government benefits accordingly.'<sup>163</sup> The African workers were encouraged by the agency to send their money home rather than to 'squander' it in the towns. Other reforms made as part of the developing system of 'Native Administration' could be shown to serve similar objectives in one way or another maintaining migrant and thus cheapened labour power in the towns.

The rapidity at which reserves were accumulated by the Native Administration Department increased conflicts about how the money should be spent, on more effective policing of the African population or on forms of social welfare. As before, this conflict first became evident in a difference of opinion between the central government and the municipality. Percy Binns, the magistrate of Durban, argued in July 1914 that more money should be spent on providing facilities for African workers, and that a sports ground should be built. He criticised the department for experimenting with new and costly machinery instead of planning to providing facilities for Africans in the municipal area. He backed his advice with the threat of action by the central

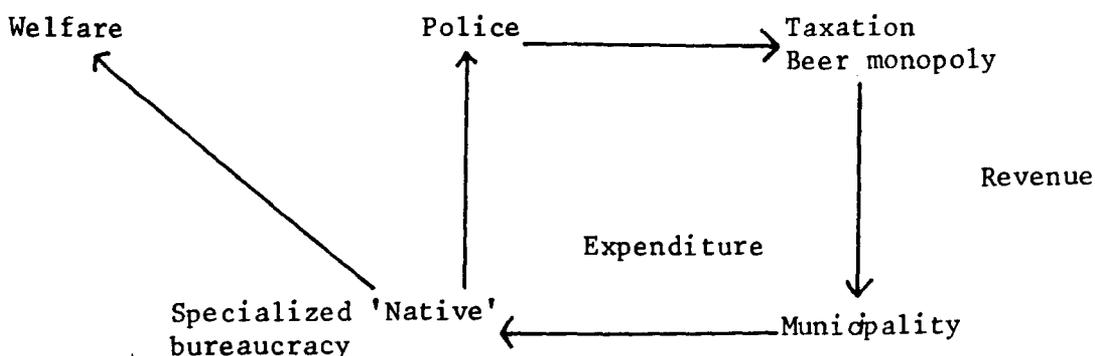
authorities, demonstrating strong differences with the priorities of the municipality:

Seriously now, don't continue to admire the 'bloated balances' but spend some of them. I don't want to have the advise the Government that they must alter the Law, to remedy the fatal mistake originally made, viz. leaving the control of the spending in the hands of the Municipality - but I shall have<sup>164</sup> to do it unless the matter is seriously taken up.

The whole experience of the togt labour system was, however, reflected in the beer monopoly; increased expenditure on repression and control rather than on the welfare aspects of the legislation. The very nature of the beer monopoly dictated close police control and perpetual battle with the petty brewers quite apart from disciplining togt workers, checking the passes of all African workers, and overseeing labour contracts. Far from the welfare aspects becoming the dominant feature of the beer monopoly, the police raised persistent demands for increased expenditure on repression. On 11 June 1917 the Chief Constable complained that the grant for the police from the Native Administration Fund was inadequate compensation for duties performed in maintaining the monopoly system. 'I would like to state', he affirmed, 'that without the existence, vigilance, and the active support of an organized Police Force, the "monopoly system" would utterly fail in its object'. The plain clothes staff, he argued, were employed for two-thirds of their time in the detection and suppression of the illegal liquor trade. Ignoring the multitude of pass fees, registration fees, fines, taxes, and the monopoly beer system itself, the Chief Constable argued that Africans in the town received free police protection, and that the force should receive increased income from the beer monopoly system:

The duties of the Native police are practically entirely devoted towards the policing of the Native Community, being required to deal with cases arising under the criminal law, general Borough Bye-Laws as well as dealing with the illicit manufacture and possession of Native beer and other forms of intoxicants...It can hardly therefore be argued that a contribution towards the police who are necessary in maintaining a monopoly which provides the Natives of this Borough with a luxury, towards which they are not compelled to contribute, is in any sense unreasonable. 165

From the logic of this argument, African workers should pay for the privilege of falling under the control of the police *and* being able to buy monopoly beer. The demands for increased income from the Native Revenue Account was evidence of a permanent tendency to close 'Native Administration' in upon itself (in shorthand, taxation-revenue-repression-taxation) rather than the expansion of expenditure into new 'welfare' areas.



As the Chief Constable argued, the police were central to the revenue base created by the tax and monopoly system; without constant suppression of petty brewing the municipal breweries would be undermined. The police were just as important in enforcing local and state taxes; during 1909, for instance, the

municipal police and water police devoted their whole attention to rounding up tax defaulters failing only by £770 to equal the previous years total. <sup>166</sup> The diagram attempts to map out the flow of money and authority to demonstrate the constant tendency for welfare expenditure to fall outside the cycle of revenue accumulation unless it was integral to that cycle as were, for example, the eating houses which sold the municipal beer.

### Specialized bureaucracy

The major achievement of the Durban system was not the incidental by-product of welfare, but the growth of a specialized bureaucracy within the municipality to control African workers. The openly coercive force of the police used in the administration of the togt regulations was 'modernized' by an increasingly sophisticated programme of paternalistic social control, professionally independent but strongly backed by the police. As Swanson describes it: 'The apparatus of registration and passes associated with the togt system was perpetuated and extended in pursuit of its long-established though elusive objective of influx control, surveillance and labour exchange.'<sup>167</sup> While the transition was certainly not without immense problems (the regular amendments to legislation governing these areas shows how difficult control is to achieve in practice) the developing Native Administration Department marked a leap ahead in detailed control over African workers. Armed with the ideology of segregation and racial superiority, trays of record cards and improved identity

documents, and rows of clerks, the Department rapidly increased its scope and effectiveness. Other municipalities later came to regard the beer monopoly, professionalism, and detailed control of the Durban department as a model to follow.

The charter of the NAD, headed by its first professional manager, J. S. Marwick, who was appointed in 1916, was the Native Affairs By-Laws promulgated on 8 November 1916.<sup>168</sup> Marwick later argued that these bye-laws had become necessary because of a sudden increase in crime by Africans in 1916. In justification he argued the strongest action against criminals had the support of the African petty bourgeoisie: 'even the Native press drew attention to the matter, and suggested remedies such as the permanent expulsion from the borough of Natives caught in the acts of violence or hooliganism'.<sup>169</sup> The penalties in the bye-laws were, however, criminally punitive rather than embodying the crucial penalty of deportation from the cities.

The regulations were founded on a racial definition ('barbarous races') and laid down precise procedures for registration, passes, and contracts of service.<sup>170</sup> All work seekers were required to report for a medical examination and to submit themselves to vaccination. A curfew was established between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. and most importantly African workers were bound to produce evidence of registration 'on demand'; failure could lead to arrest without a warrant.<sup>171</sup> The registration office was empowered to keep a

black list of all Africans who were convicted of crime.<sup>172</sup>

A long list of offences were laid down applying both to workers and employers, although the penalties for African workers were considerably harsher.<sup>173</sup> The togt workers were provided with the toughest penalties: a maximum of three months imprisonment with hard labour and fine of £10<sup>174</sup> for the familiar schedule of crimes. After having been successfully resisted in 1904<sup>175</sup> the lodging fee of 5s per month was again levied on togt workers who were also required to live in compounds.<sup>176</sup>

In short, the regulations established a rigid set of coercive practices which subjected African workers to detailed bureaucratic controls and made them more vulnerable to the social power of the employers. They increased the weight of racial oppression on the shoulders of African workers and strengthened the ability of employers to exact higher levels of exploitation. Even though they were not consciously advocated as such, the togt regulations and other measures formed part of the ruling class strategy after the South African War to establish the country as a profit centre within British imperialism. The struggle for a high rate of return on capital in South Africa necessitated a cheap labour system reinforced with new measures to meet the increasing resistance of the African workers and the tendency for wages to rise in the heat of the war boom.

The political representatives of the Durban property owners divided under the strain of pressure from below into two broad groupings; the repressionists who demanded increased direct municipal control over African workers at the lowest cost, and

the segregationists who were prepared to devote more municipal expenditure on 'solving' the problem of resistance by allowing African family life in segregated urban locations. The contest between the two factions which at its height gathered the merchants and householders into the first group and the small industrial bourgeoisie and 'far-sighted' bureaucrats into the second, faded with the collapse of the war boom and the higher wages the workers were able to demand. The unity of the property owners as a whole was made possible under the reconstruction of South Africa under British imperialism in which an efficient cheap labour system was a priority.

In Durban this took the form of a highly developed machine of regulation which was self-financing through the togt taxes and beer monopoly, provided barrack accommodation, a specialized bureaucracy, and a police force. The 'Durban system' marked a considerable advance in the development of the capitalist state in its municipal and national forms, lowering the cost of domination and control of the mass of the workers to the property owners. The togt regulations were transparently an attempt by the bourgeoisie to place the burden of the cost of barracks and social control directly on the shoulders of the workers, simultaneously lessening their independence and lowering their wages. The beer monopoly, which tapped a wider social base, was a revenue-generating goldmine and paid for a politically skilled bureaucracy in addition to other services for the bourgeoisie. This widening of the tax base, along with a policy of leasing municipal land, secured for the property owners of Durban considerably reduced municipal rates.

By the turn of the century there was in Durban a growing African working class which was increasingly resistant to low wages and the municipality which reinforced the social power of the employers. In Natal as a whole a high proportion of the African male population was in wage employment in the towns, farms, and mines. Increasing numbers of workers were also seeking employment in the Transvaal gold mining areas and elsewhere in Southern Africa. But the numbers of African workers in employment were only a partial indication of the level of proletarianization of the African population. A qualitative study of labour migration in Natal demonstrates a high proportion of African male migrants even from fairly remote rural districts, the lowest level of migrancy being recorded in the white agricultural districts where Africans were employed on the farms. Behind the active army of labour stood the large reserve army of labour; those migrants having completed a term of wage labour, those working unpaid labour tenancy contracts, and an increasingly impoverished peasantry. It was this changed character of the countryside, the movement of thousands of migrants into the harsh discipline of capitalist production and then back to the rural districts, and the acute impoverishment of the homesteads after the South Africa war which provided the foundations of the armed resistance to the poll tax. The brutal crushing of the Bambata uprising in the countryside paved the way for such sweeping measures as the beer monopoly in the towns.

Increasingly the African workers and peasants acted independently of their traditional rulers and the mission educated African petty bourgeoisie. The struggle against the poll tax was conducted against the advice of Dube, and the educated political leadership repudiated all forms of direct action by the workers. The prospect of united working class action, with African workers learning the techniques of strikes and picketing from organized white workers, was as repulsive to them as to the political leadership of the white workers. In this period African workers had to move into action against the express instructions of the African petty bourgeoisie which advised the workers and peasants to place their trust in the fair-mindedness of British imperialism. Given the low level of organization among African workers at this time, these differences did not become sharpened, but provide early evidence of different strategies in response to national and class oppression.

FOOTNOTES

1. CW 24: 400.
2. Warwick, 1977: 104, 111.
3. ibid.,107 .
4. ibid.,112, 108).
5. ibid., 107 .
6. Statistical Yearbook, Natal, 1900.
7. Mayor's Minute, 1900 and 1904.
8. Transvaal Chamber of Minutes, 1904:422.
9. A more comprehensive analysis would have to assess the movement of African workers not only because of a lack of local employment but also the movement to the rural areas where the higher wages are paid, a central feature of Lenin's study of migration in response to the development of capitalism in Russia (Lenin, 1972: 578, 588).
10. Calculating from the overall Natal ratio of African women aged 15 years and older divided by African children 0-5 = 2.899, the census data gives 160 African women who could have been mothers. As urban African families were very likely to have been smaller than the average Natal African family, as children are sent back to the homestead while husband and wife live in town, a higher estimate has been adopted. African families in urban areas were very reluctantly acknowledged and particularly vulnerable to wholesale removal during moral panics and epidemics.
11. Chairman's Report, Natal Chamber of Commerce, 1904:22 .
12. South African, 4 March 1905.
13. See Appendix for yearly statistics on employment in Durban 1900-15.
14. Natal Witness, 25 November 1895.
15. NBBNA, 1902:A53.
16. Swanson (1968:147) has drawn attention to the way in which the imagery of infection and disease permeated discussion by the white property owners of Indian and African people. This was also the language of the English bourgeoisie in discussing slum removals in working class areas. The plague did give powerful impetus for demands to segregate blacks from the urban areas to the periphery.
17. Mayor's Minute, 1903, Medical Officer's Report: 59-60 .

18. NBBNA, 1902:A53.
19. Clause 20 of the Togat By-Laws. Strikes by togt workers would be illegal in terms of Clause 7 which required togt workers to work if offered the minimum wages laid down.
20. Simons, 1969:96-97, originally Natal Legislative Assembly Debates, 28 July 1903. The African petty bourgeoisie supported this legislation for the same reasons. Ipepo lo Hlanga, 1 May 1903.
21. It is not clear whether Dube was demanding white strikers should be punished or African strikers not prosecuted. The article did not point out the rapid increase in the cost of living for African workers. Radebe owned a drapery shop and was a Methodist local preacher. Marks, (1970):73.
22. Ipepo lo Hlanga, (17 July 1903).
23. Unidentified document, Killie Campbell Library, Durban.
24. Natal Mercury, 1 June 1903.
25. SANAC III: para 28,387.
26. SANAC III: para 28,390.
27. SANAC III: 28,295.
28. SANAC III: para 30,107.
29. SANAC III, 28,171.
30. Swanson, 1976: 173.
31. SNA 176/1902.
32. Johnstone (1976):42.
33. Maynard, W., Swanson, 1968. Urban origins of separate development, Race, 10: 31-40 and 1976, 'The Durban System': roots of urban apartheid in colonial Natal. African Studies, 35:159-176.
34. Swanson (1976):176.
35. Swanson employs the concepts of 'vested interests' (161), 'vested interest in labour' (174), and 'social forces' and 'interest groups' (160) to describe the motivation for clashes in policy and a common determination to maintain the subordination of African workers.
36. 1968:32. (My Underlining).
37. ibid., 176.
38. ibid., 142.
39. ibid., 33.

40. Warwick, (1977) : 112.
41. SNA 176/1902. The quotations which follow are from this source.
42. There is obviously some confusion in talking of the monthly wages of day labour, possibly what these figures refer to is an average calculation of the monthly earnings of togt workers. The other possibility is that the figures refer to the wages of dock labourers employed on a monthly contract by labour contractors, e.g. Mozambiquan workers imported during the time of labour shortage in the docks, or from Pondoland. (See Natal Native Affairs Commission evidence, and SANAC III: page 35). Employers may also have deliberately reduced their estimates of average wages; on the basis of a wage of 3s 6d per day, monthly earnings of 40s would have involved only about 12 days labour per month. The figures quoted by Colonel Lawson are probably more realistic.
43. Marks (1970), 134.
44. SNA 176/1902.
45. ibid.
46. Warwick, (1977), 110.
47. Commanding Officer in Natal, Major-General Fetherstonhaugh, quoted in Marks, (1970) 135. There were probably more strikes than those reported of the African tramwaymen in Pietermaritzburg, remount workers, and togt workers.
48. This chauvinism is most marked in the more radical nationalist, Mark Radebe, who vigorously opposed the importation of foreign labour to South Africa. Chinese labourers he argued were too expensive, loved 'very rich food' and tea 'every five minutes'. The Chinese had a 'vicious temper' and a questionable 'moral standing'. Worst of all, 'the average Chinaman) is very peevish and will "strike" work at the least conceivable provocation and is quite indifferent to punishment'. Ipepo lo Hlanga, 27 November 1903. Radebe also supported action against miscegenation and sexual relations between black and white (SANAC III, 26, 434) and subscribed to the view that lack of social controls were leading to the disintegration of the African nation.
49. NBBNA, 1901, B61.
50. NBBNA, 1901, B62.
51. Mayor's Minute, 1901.

52. W. Storm applied for permission from the Secretary of Native Affairs to recruit 50 Zanzibaris, Messrs. Renaud & Co. for 100 workers from Madagascar, and Messrs. Chiazzari and Co. for 100 Zanzibari workers. (SNA 2871/1902, 1504/1902, 5125/1902). These applications for workers sent to the colonial authorities in Zanzibar and Madagascar were unsuccessful however, although permission was readily granted to introduce foreign workers on long term contracts if they were available.
53. NBBNA, 1903:84.
54. The contract seems to imply that workers would only be paid on those days on which they were employed despite the general two year contract. Currie's conservative estimate for average togt wages in 1902 was 3s.
55. NBBNA, 1903:84.
56. The evidence is that the overwhelming preponderance of contract labour was supplied to the docks rather than mines and plantations as suggested by Marks, (1970:134).
57. NBBNA, 1904:115.
58. The conditions of these workers were appalling, the official statistics showing a high death rate and large numbers of desertions. Of the 294 Zanzibar workers recruited by Maby Brothers 17 died, 20 deserted, and 64 were 'unaccounted for'. Following their transfer to the African Boating Company a further 20 died and 9 deserted; finally leaving 103 out of 294 workers to be repatriated after about 18 months employment. (NBBNA, 1904:114).
59. NBBNA, 1903:84.
60. This statement is not altogether true. During the Newcastle conference the Secretary of Native Affairs, Moor, said that togt badges were available to labourers who had served a (monthly) contract, a first stage in shifting labour supply to registered monthly employment as a form of apprenticeship to the independence of togt work.
61. The signatories to the petition included a member of the Special Committee appointed to investigate the accommodation of togt workers, T. Poynton, as well as Randles Brothers, Henwoods, John Millar and Co., Acutts, Rolfes Nebel and Co., Messrs. Alcock and Co., Payne Brothers, James Noble and Co., W.F. Johnstone, Jackson Brothers, A.C. Wood, and H. M. Gillespie. These were most of the signatories; a few other signatures could not be deciphered. The list consists primarily of important commercial companies, and individuals connected with commerce.

62. Mayor's Minute, 1902. There had been an attempt to introduce togt regulations in the Municipal Bill of 1901 but that Bill had not become law and the question of togt labour now had to be reintroduced as a separate issue. (NLAD, 15 April, 1902, page 370).
63. NLAD, 15 April, page 370.
64. This discrepancy between the written law and Moor's interpretation was to prove a fruitful source of conflict between the Durban municipality which wanted the 'cheapest' reorganization of labour control, and Moor who saw the togt law as a piece of comprehensive legislation setting out the broad basis of segregation and political subordination. Urban residential segregation was provided for by Act No.2, 1904, 'To enable Town Councils to establish Native Locations' promulgated on 17 March 1904.
65. Taylor referred later in the debates to the advantage of this clause for 'very large businesses' specifically manufacturers and landing agents. (NLAD, 21 April 1902: 405).
66. NLAD, 23 April 1902, page 464.
67. NLAD, 23 April 1902:465.
68. Finally promulgated as Act No. 28, 1902, 'To make better provision in regard to the Togg labour system in Boroughs' on 25 October 1902.
69. Council Minutes, 23 June 1902.
70. SI designates the togt law as racial, applicable only to Africans; S3 prohibited any African living in a town except as a proprietor or renter of a house, a registered monthly or yearly employer, or a togt worker.
71. S4 (b) and S4(g). The law incorporated Taylor's amendment making the 'harbouring' of togt workers an offence.
72. One of the contradictions of the existing regulations (which were themselves held to be unconstitutional) was that white employers could not be prosecuted for not carrying out the Togg regulations.
73. The by-laws were confirmed under Proclamation No.35, 1904, Natal Government Gazette, 5 April 1904.
74. S14.
75. S5 and S10. It could be argued that rent was not a form of taxation, the regulations defining rent as payment for shelter, water, lighting, and sanitary conveniences. Because of the compulsion to live in this accommodation and the importance of compounds as a form of systematic control, I include rent as a form of tax of workers.

76. S.14.
77. S3. Identification of workers was developed by the Identification of Native Servants Act of 1901 which was amended in 1904.
78. S6 and S7.
79. S4(d) of Act 28, 1902.
80. S11.
81. S12.
82. S15.
83. The maximum was rather flexible even on paper: 'such maximum number can be altered and varied by the Town Council as circumstances may require'. Throughout the history of compounds in Durban compounds have been vastly overcrowded, c.f. Housing Survey. S18(h) contained a general regulation requiring employers to admit municipal officials to see that overcrowding was prevented, and S18(g) required employers to provide a written list of the numbers of badges of togt workers lodged at any given time.
84. S18(a), (b), (c), and (d). It was unlikely that baths were ever installed, most compounds have not even provided showers.
85. S18(e) and (f).
86. S20. The 1874 regulations distinguished between first and subsequent offenders and did not mention 'spare diet', an innovation of the later regulations.
87. The number of togt prosecutions were as follows:
- |      |     |      |     |
|------|-----|------|-----|
| 1900 | 88  | 1905 | 301 |
| 1901 | 241 | 1906 | 211 |
| 1902 | 483 | 1907 | 232 |
| 1903 | 594 | 1908 | 324 |
| 1904 | 541 |      |     |
- Mayor's Minutes of respective years.
88. SANAC, III: para 28,274.
89. SANAC III:28,254, 28,275.
90. SANAC, III: 28,244, 28,366.
91. SANAC III: 28,247, 28,252, 28,251.

92. Alexander was horrified by the possibility of white householders and their sons taking on the leita gangs which could spark off a racial conflagration in volatile setting. 'What will be the result? Black against White! That is why I am so anxious to put a stop to it at once.' White citizens should keep clear of Africans and 'let the police do the dirty work.' (SANAC, III: 28 252).
93. Quoted in Swanson, 1976: 166.
94. ibid., 166.
95. Incoming letter 35029.
96. The Durban Builders' Association urged the Council to press on with the erection of togt barracks as a solution to the problem of labour supply, possibly also with a view to the building contracts for these compounds. Minutes of Town Council, 5 August 1902.
97. SANAC, Annexure 19: 35.
98. SANAC, Annexure 19:35.
99. The issue of rent and realization of higher land prices is obviously crucial for the scientific analysis of segregation and the housing question in South Africa. Uniquely in capitalist development the African people have been denied household accommodation in the central urban areas, in comparison to the situation in seaports in capitalist countries where the dock workers live adjacent to the workplace. Despite this, there is a general tendency during the phase of monopoly capitalism for programmes of 'urban renewal' to displace the working class from areas considered most beneficial to future profitability in the cities.
100. Act No.2, 1904: 'To enable Town Councils to establish Native Locations' promulgated 17 March 1904. This legislation was essentially permissive, applicable only when its provisions were adopted by the Town Council (S9). It exempted African landowners, those exempted from Native Law, and those workers whose sleeping accommodation was provided by their employers (S3). It adopted two important principles: prohibition of brewing and sale of beer (S4), and compulsory removal from the town of all Africans not exempted in S3 to the urban location.
101. Swanson (1976) to some extent creates the conception that the segregationists were victorious by not quoting opposition to their programme.
102. The discussion which follows draws upon minutes of a meeting of the Town Council with the Secretary of Native Affairs on 8 April 1903 and evidence by Alexander and Jameson to the South African Native Affairs Commission, in May 1904. In order to present the ideas of the protagonists clearly, material from these two events which were separated by a year are presented concurrently.

103. SNA 17/1903.
104. Mayor's Minute 1898. The demand for segregation was not necessarily contradictory with support for a 'modernized' compound system. Alexander is here protesting against backyard accommodation, he entirely approved of the compounds built by the town council. Jameson also recognized the necessity of housing emergency dock workers in compounds at the docks while arguing for other workers to be placed in the location.
105. SANAC, III: 28,178.
106. Alexander also agreed compounds were a form of imprisonment, despite his endorsement of the municipal compounds. During the April 1903 meeting he was reported as follows: 'He hated the very thought of barracks; they were against the nature of the native. Put the natives in the glorious sunshine, in the open, where they could wash themselves on the back beach or somewhere else. But take them from the back yards, from the terrible temptations they were now in.' (SNA 17/1903).
107. SNA 17/1903.
108. SANAC, III: 30,055. Alexander argued the locations would solve the social needs of African workers while at the same time provide for a form of militarization of labour. 'They could lie under the trees or swim in the river as long as they liked. They would be perfectly happy...' In contrast to this idyllic life, he favoured barracks and proposed marching the workers into town 'as they do with soldiers'. (SANAC, III: 28 351).
109. SANAC, III: 30 129.
110. Moor (SNA 17, 1903) in arguing for the location said 'the point was that the Natives so located did not work for six months in the year and for the other six off to their Kraals.'
111. SNA 17/1903. Ellis Brown concentrated on the technical problem of segregation for the docks rather than resisting the location directly from the merchants viewpoint. Jameson did respond to this criticism by suggesting a division in dock labour between 'a certain number of men at command, only the surplus being taken away' but could not respond to the reservations of other Councillors that he was going far beyond dealing with the togt labour problem to reorganize completely labour supplies in Durban.
112. SNA 17/1903.
113. NBBNA, 1904: 70. The Natal Native Reform League's concern was with the 'filth' of Africans in towns and with possible deterioration in the 'white race'. Stuart talks of 'race feeling', 'dominant race', and Europeans being the 'ruling power'. This racism was closely connected with a belief in the possibility of white degenerating in a tropical society and disgust for 'low whites'.

114. NBBNA, 1904: 76.
115. Natal Act 31, 1903: Section 16, originally quoted in Simons, 1968: 107. Simon writes that these drastic penalties were to 'stamp out the violation of the White man's prerogative' in exclusive access to white prostitutes. Alexander, however, in providing evidence to SANAC did not consider white prostitutes would 'entertain' Africans. There is scattered evidence of white and black living together. The Natal Advertiser of 2 November 1904 reported on the action of vigilantes in 'a certain country town' who tarred and feathered whites who were living with 'Arabs'. Again Alexander provided evidence of white men taking on African mistresses in highly unequal relationships. (SANAC, III: 28,375). Mark Radebe was probably representative of the African petty bourgeoisie in being outraged by interracial sexual relations and in demanding control over African women in town. 'A white man may take a black woman and stay with her in spite of the badge law, the registration law. There are women here who are simply uncontrollable; their parents cannot get at them, and the white man says "funani boy", and tells the father to go his way, and the woman is staying there inside and with a white man; she gives up all, and is kept.' Radebe accepted a version of the 'degeneration' view of African life put forward by the bourgeoisie: 'With all the offences of the Native community, the nation is going, and it is going badly.' (SANAC, III: 26,434, 26,436). Both black and white men, of course, viewed their 'prerogatives' from the basis of patriarchal control, both wanted 'their' women not to have relationships with men of the opposite race. The national oppression of African people encouraged two important tendencies: social chauvinism among white workers who saw in the degradation of African workers the potential position to which they could be reduced, and reactionary views in the African petty bourgeoisie alarmed by new forms of social relations in the towns. The local bourgeoisie and the African petty bourgeoisie were united in demanding the strictest controls over the movement and lives of African women, their main ideological weapon being that of morality. From the leading organs of bourgeois opinion came most violent attacks on interracial marriage. See, for instance, Natal Mercury, 15 December 1904. It was pressures such as these which widened the whole spectrum of racial legislation.
116. Labour leaders such as W. McLarty, a stock broker, F.S. Tatham, an advocate, and C. H. Haggart, an academic 'state socialist', advocated preference to white workers in state employment and labour arbitration as a means of isolating white workers from the mass of the working class and disorganizing the struggle of African workers. Like other local leaders such as Dr. S.G. Campbell, a leading advocate of the Workers' Educational Association, they opposed Indian immigration. All were united in building a solid white bloc. In the words of F. S. Tatham: 'There is only one sound policy to go on, and it is by the Eternal decree which we cannot alter, the white man, and the white man only, is the governing factor.' Ilanga lase Natal, 17 February 1903, quoted in Swanson, 1976: 169.

117. Natal Advertiser, (20 October 1904.) These certificates were possibly the forerunners of the character references later an issue of great contention.
118. Ibid. Swanson's interpretation of these types of statement is that they were unnecessarily alarmist since African workers never really effectively challenged the state. The whole direction of the argument here is, however, that African workers resistance brought about the tighter state measures of the post-war period in an attempt to stem the tide of insubordination in the towns and countryside.
119. NNBB, 1904: 74. This is the most developed view of the necessity of 'professionalizing' and specializing the state bureaucracy to provide exclusive contact and more effective control over a 'massified' African work force. Jameson (SANAC, III: 30,046) did talk of specially selected white bureaucrats to provide for the welfare and 'firm, even if an unobtrusive, control' over African residents in locations.
120. NNBB, 1904: 70.
121. NNBB, 1904: 72, 73.
122. NNBB, 1904:78.
123. NNBB, 1904: 75.
124. NNBB, 1904: 77.
125. NNBB, 1904: 78.
126. SANAC, III: 33,325.
127. SANAC, III: 32 082. Luthuli explained that the issue of the franchise had not been unanimously decided upon, and that he favoured white representatives to represent African interests. He said that Africans did not have any particular grievances in 1904. (32,085).
128. SANAC, III: 32,258.
129. 26,055.
130. 32,380.
131. SANAC, III: 26,343. During the discussion on the possibility of importing foreign labour, Radebe argued that the isibalo powers should be used to 'turn our people out to work'. Ipepo lo Hlanga, (27 November 1903).

132. SANAC, III: 26,170. Radebe was speaking as a Methodist lay preacher, choir master, and organist. Marks (1970): 70, describes how closely the political leadership was related to the Methodist and American Congregational churches, and their denunciation of the 'Ethiopian movement'. At various moments the missionaries, however, followed conciliatory policies to the breakaway movements.
133. Radebe cites as an example of petty oppression the advance payment of lobola before marriage; it is from this perspective that he claimed to speak for the masses. He was rather more radical than Luthuli who said he was not opposed to chiefs and the tribal system, and argued that the chiefs helped the government. (SANAC, III: 26 055, 32,307, 32,139).
134. Konczacki (1967) 23, describes how capitalist agriculture was developed through the rapid expansion of the railways.
135. Warwick (1977:111) quotes figures of imports of goods bought by Africans in Natal rising from £159,910 in 1899 to £271,450
136. Schumann (1938: 94).
137. Konczacki (1967:97).
138. Konczacki (1967:62).
139. Marks (1970) 140 ff., gives a detailed discussion on the manoeuvring within the ruling class before deciding upon this specific measure.
140. Marks, (1970) 173, mentions that Stuart was well aware of the potentially violent resistance the state would encounter and considered the tactics should be carefully calculated. During this time the employment of togt workers was declining sharply. In early November 1904 the Superintendent of Police reported that workers at the harbour were in demand and that the togt workers were refusing to occupy the Point barracks. According to him, 1,960 togt badges had been renewed, 780 workers occupied the Point barracks and 300 were living in barracks near the jail. By 1905, however, there was a drastic decline in employment: only 23,210 togt certificates were issued against 61,400 the previous year. This was a response both to the onset of the post-war depression and the evasion of the higher fees by the workers. The togt workers apparently persuaded householders to register them as monthly workers while others rented small rooms from Indians. (Natal Advertiser, 8 November 1904, and Mayor's Minute, 1905, Police Department Report). By early 1906 Stuart was more confident that the poll tax would be accepted and that the 'resentful spirit' had cooled and time had 'enabled Natives to see that the measure in question does not press as much on them as at first they thought it would.'

141. Ilanga lase Natal, 10 November 1905 quoted in Marks (1970: 333 fn).
142. Dube mentions the high rents imposed on Mission Reserves, the compulsory labour system, the pass laws, and other oppressive laws in the summary of the article presented in Marks (1970):332, the burning question of the day was not mentioned.
143. Marks (1970) 333 .
144. This is argued in pages 308-309 and is a necessary corrective to the ruling class' interpretation that black preacher agitators rather than the poll tax were the spark to the uprising.
145. Marks (1970:190) Makanda and Mjongo were sawyers and leading members of the Presbyterian Church of Africa. Mjongo was hanged in 1906 after being badly injured. (See also Stuart, 1913:129).
146. Marks (1970) 230. Employers made strong efforts to keep their workers in town . Thomas Raynes,(a labour agent) for instance, was favourably mentioned in Natal Who's Who as having kept a gang of 650 Africans together at the Point with only two deserting.
147. Marks (1970) 237-240.
148. A possible explanation of the 'turn to the reserves' was the fact that the poll tax was exacted in the rural magistries rather than the towns.
149. While in 1906 Dube reprimanded the Edendale property owning peasantry for becoming 'loyal levies' at the same time he argued against the folly of taking up arms. Marks (1970):335.
150. The whole development of 'segregation' in the urban areas is closely linked to the growth of large-scale commercial capital, to land prices, and building societies. Although totally neglected by liberal and nationalist critiques of the development of 'group areas' (which tend to concentrate on the revenue reaped by the state through its intervention in racial zoning of the cities) a Marxist analysis is essential to an evaluation of the deprivation of land ownership by Indian and Coloured people in the cities and the vicious attacks on the Indian trading classes particularly in the 1960s. My impression is that the group area demarcations are preceded by careful negotiations between all sections of capital and the state. Obviously the 'political' and 'financial' factors are closely related, not only in the dominant but also in the subordinated classes. Representatives on the Indian Council are obviously not unaware of new areas for Indian land ownership before they are officially proclaimed.

151. SANAC, III, para 224-237. The whole question of liquor has a long history in relation to the development of the black working class, throughout Southern Africa. In Natal before the turn of the century, the price of rum (in modern parlance 'cane spirits') was included as part of the necessary diet of labourers. During the British reconstruction of the Transvaal total prohibition was enforced with wage reductions as a means of squeezing more labour time out of the workers and securing discipline over work and leisure. (van Onselen, 1976:78). As in Natal, liquor might have served as an inducement for workers to offer their labour power, but also speeded up the development of a permanent working class severing links with the countryside. The ideological control of tribalism and the rural subsidy to wages would be lost to bourgeoisie; a theme into which the Durban Department of Native Affairs had *developed* deep insight). The precise relationship between brewers and sellers (a major theme in van Onselen) is difficult to work out from SANAC and other contemporary reports; it could be that the men acted as the public distributors of beer brewed by the women. Early reports mentioned women bringing beer into the towns for relatives; by the late 1920s it is definitely women who are both brewers and sellers.
152. SANAC, 381.
153. Natal Advertiser, 8 December 1904. The article draws on the question of sanitation and public health, a key issue in the armoury of bourgeois ideology against the labouring poor and an important component of virulent racism. Msangwa is the Zulu term for cannøbis.
154. Marks, (1970) 140.
155. From what evidence is available it seems as though none of the black petty bourgeoisie defended the African women's right to brew beer or saw the beer monopoly as a factor of racial oppression. Before the South African war, Saul Msane, a founder member of the Natal Native Congress and compound manager of Jubilee Mine, campaigned for 'total prohibition' on the mines and strict enforcement of the liquor laws. (van Onselen, 1976:73). Presumably he held the same views in relation to state control over liquor in Durban.
156. Evidence of A. J. Cook (Select Committee 3, 1923:21). Cook was a major propogandist against the municipal beer monopoly as a leading member of the South African Temperance Alliance and supported total prohibition.
157. Native Beer Bye-Laws.

158. E.J. Hobsbawn, 1969. Industry and Empire, Penguin, p.46.
159. Swanson, (1976): 74. Swanson argues that the municipality exaggerated the 'runaway illicit liquor trade' to create a favourable social climate for introducing the beer monopoly. This may well be true, but it still remains to explain why the municipality struck on beer rather than another 'social evil' as a central issue in the onslaught on the black community.
160. Evidence of Dr. J. McCord to the Select Committee on Native Affairs (S.C.3, 1923), page 58-59. Reverend A. J. Cook who gave evidence on behalf of the Temperance Alliance situated the liquor restrictions in terms of the social reform movement following the Bambata uprising. He vigorously opposed the sale of any liquor to Africans. It is not clear whether this Alliance had any connection with 'The South African Alliance for the Reform of the Liquor Traffic' which secured prohibition on the Rand in the immediate post-South African war period, an aim closely associated with those of mining capitalists. (van Onselen, 1976:79-81).
161. Report on Native Affairs Department made to Durban Town Council Meeting on 30 July 1915.
162. Mayor's Minute, 1909.
163. Report of the Native Affairs Department for 1910 (U17, 1911), p.235.
164. Durban Municipal Records, Natal Archives, File 55/117.
165. Durban Municipal Records, Natal Archive, File 55/117.
166. NBBNA, 1909:XXXV. During this year Durban was the leading centre of income from poll tax contributing £4,818. Despite this record there was a substantial decline from the £6,690 collected in poll tax in Durban during the repression of the Bambatha Rebellion in 1906.
167. Swanson, (1976)174.
168. Native Affairs By-Laws, Borough of Durban, Natal Provincial Gazette No.372, 9 November 1916.
169. Natal Mercury, 5 June 1918. If this statement is true, it is certainly remarkable, as the African petty bourgeoisie would have been calling for the enforcement of one of the most oppressive aspects of national oppression in South Africa.
170. S1-8.
171. S9 and 10.

- 172. S13.
- 173. S14-17.
- 174. S28.
- 175. Swanson, (1976)173.
- 176. S22 and 23.

## CHAPTER 3

## The ICU, beer and bureaucracy

Bolshevism means the rule of the working class. And when the workers rule, the capitalists cannot carry on their robber system any more. Bolshevism means the victory of the wage-earners. Get ready for the World-wide Republic of Labour. The way to get ready is to combine in the workshops. Combine as workers, no matter what colour. Before Labour can emancipate itself black workers as well as white must combine in one organisation of Labour, irrespective of craft, colour, or creed. Workers of the world, unite!

(Pamphlet distributed in Natal in Zulu translation, The International, 25 April 1919.)

The leadership of the working class in the struggle for democracy and in the resistance to the capitalist state is essential to a Marxist perspective on political and social movements. As in other countries where the majority has suffered under extreme forms of national oppression, this leadership (both in the demands made by the working class and the mass action which provides the dynamism to resistance) is obscured by the support which the workers often provide to petty bourgeois leaders who add some of the workers' demands to their nationalist rhetoric and the universal opposition of all oppressed to the measures of oppression. The extraordinary importance of the Durban dock workers in resistance to the employers and the state in the period between the wars assumed national significance and provides a graphic illustration of the class character of mass resistance. In the course of the struggles against the municipalization of beer, the tax system, and wage reductions, the social movement of the workers brought out the differentiation between oppressed classes to these forms of national oppression and is germane to a discussion of leaders and followers in the resistance. Durban generally, and the dock workers specifically, became characterized as a stormy field of social action threatening at a number of conjunctures to force a breach through the wall of state and employer control. The resistance to the poll tax spilled over into the countryside, underground cells of workers were formed in the city, and abrupt confrontations with the state demonstrated the fragility of the plethora of regulations and laws in the face of united working class action. In the face of such opposition the local and national state sought to modify the legal system of control and replace the dictates of formal regulation with the more elastic forms of domination. Yet these modifications, essentially minor and with the aim of dividing resistance to the local state, could only be introduced after sweeping repression and specifically the national raids mounted on the Point compounds from where the workers were leading the struggle against the state. The coordinated counter measures to the advance of the workers took the most vigorous repression at the beginning of the depression, but with

the onset of rising unemployment and wage reductions, social and economic factors as well as political and administrative factors took their toll. With the revival of economic growth in the mid-1930s the stevedoring workers, as other workers in industry, fought to regain the position they had lost before the world-wide destruction of capital.

Those sections of the ruling class directly concerned with the racial forms of domination over the African working class, the 'Native administration' bureaucracy and the missionaries, were particularly concerned about the changes in the African working people brought about during the war. Both recognized that a permanent 'detrribalization' was taking place, that African workers, impelled by the dual pressures of rural impoverishment and increasing urban employment, were shifting to the towns with their families and that this process was irreversible. These changes posed the demand for the reproduction of a specifically African working class, separated from the 'low types' in the Indian and white working class and under specifically racial forms of domination. Officials and missionaries alike were concerned to blunt the effects of the proletarianization of African workers and to suppress the development of class consciousness. The war, accompanied by an expansion of industrial production throughout South Africa, attracted an increasing number of African workers, the African population of Durban rising from 17,925 in 1918 to 29,011 in 1921.<sup>1</sup> The increase in the mass of African workers was accompanied by a growing number of African families struggling to survive in the towns, African women were being increasingly employed as domestic servants. Marwick, writing at the conclusion of the war, was disturbed that the patriarchal order of tribal life which secured dependence and allegiance to authority was disintegrating.<sup>2</sup> An African proletariat was emerging which was permanently attached to the urban areas and engaged in continuous work, which was accompanied by the 'demoralization' of the people. Homosexuality was becoming common in the compounds (described in Zulu as Izitabane) and secret, hierarchical, criminal organizations were also to be

found.<sup>3</sup> As the proletarianization of the African workers advanced so the ideological subordination of the workers ('restraints of custom') were reinforced through legislation; a curfew was enforced, Africans' use of the sidewalks, streets and open places was regulated, and a wide range of controls exercised through the Native Affairs bylaws. With the reorganization of registration of African workers, after the registration under Law 21 of 1888 had apparently fallen into disuse, 'the town Natives are now under better control'. The Native Affairs Department acted in loco parentis over African workers through police discipline, but its tasks were not solely repressive; the officials helped find minors in the cities, sorted out petty disputes, recovered industrial compensation for injuries, and encouraged thrift and a system of deferred pay. These 'welfare' functions of the department reinforced the paternalism of control and the patriarchal system in the reserves and white farms. Marwick was keenly aware of the conflict between the goal of the Native Affairs Department and those of other sections of society; he was one of the first to draw attention to the propaganda of socialists among African workers and the threat this posed to the state.<sup>4</sup> The 'preaching of Socialism and syndicalism amongst the Natives in their present backward state is wholly undesirable'. He was somewhat cautious in discussing the source of revenue for the apparatus of racial domination: the monopoly of beer brewing. The Missionary Conference in Natal had criticized the system for leading to demoralization and impoverishment and had requested restricted hours.<sup>5</sup> He nevertheless defended this 'experiment' as a means of keeping the African workers from stronger liquors. The source of his salary and the repression of African women necessary to enforce the monopoly of beer, which he described as the 'food' of the African people, was not mentioned. His article demonstrated the fear arising in the ruling class in the face of the growth of a permanent working class and its power in the centres of its control: the cities. The response of the ruling class was expressed in the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 which provided for uniform regulation of African workers in the towns, with curfews, regulation of service contracts, and control over liquor, as some of its most important features.<sup>6</sup>

The 'humanitarian' section of the ruling class, the missionaries, were equally concerned with the possibility of a class conscious proletariat and proposed policies which, if anything, were more racist and concerned to achieve the subordination of African families in the towns to the control of the bourgeoisie. At the Fifth General Missionary Conference held in Durban in July 1921 a special report was presented on the position of African workers in the towns. The authors acknowledged that 'detrimental' was taking place and that 'respectable Native families' were living permanently in the towns. Couched in moralistic language the missionaries described the 'degeneration' of African people in the cities. The report was most hostile to Indian and Jewish traders, looking forward to the time when African traders could 'regain the trade that the White man has thrown away to his own loss', a direct encouragement of an African petty trading class hostile to other minorities.<sup>7</sup> It also raised the spectre of African servants contaminating white children in their care with venereal disease and urged tighter control over African women in the towns. The problem of 'morality' was that African women were becoming reduced to prostitutes after being seduced by white masters to the extent that there were 'very few respectable and pure Native girls in town'.<sup>8</sup> The authors give support to the patriarchs in the countryside who were said to be demanding that the women be returned; while providing some protest against the exploitation of African women these views reinforce the view that African women should not be allowed into the towns and that the African population should be subject to strict segregation. This is most explicit in their condemnation of mixed residential areas:

In this particular neighbourhood the worst forms and the beastliest immorality prevails, the lowest types of European, Indian and Native mixing up together, with results that may very well be left to the imagination; enough to say that there is no wonder that Natives lose all respect for the White man and the White woman, when in the open daylight and in the darkness of the night vice stalks unreprieved in their very midst.<sup>9</sup>

What was most frightening to the sombre missionaries was that the relations of domination were being disturbed through 'degrading sexual intercourse' between black and white.<sup>10</sup> Their concern for 'morality' in this and other issues provided much of the rationale for the most vicious race and class measures imposed on the African working people; in defence of bourgeois morality the 'friends of the Native' were laying the ideological foundations for attacks on African women and the African working class. The missionaries expressed no doubts about the controls exacted over the African working class housed in compounds under the controls of employers and the municipality.

Regulations ... based on common-sense and a due regard to the moral welfare of the men living in the barracks, are in force and have to be observed, and rightly so too, or the barracks, instead of being healthy and respectable, would speedily degenerate into cess-pools of immorality.<sup>11</sup>

Although some doubts are expressed about municipal brewing of beer, the new scheme is seen as a definite improvement on unrestricted brewing and selling by African women and a step towards the 'ultimate goal of Prohibition'.

As the eyes and ears of the ruling class, the missionaries reported that there was a growing demand for equality between black and white and a sense of unrest and injustice. In particular, price increases were bitterly resented as 'deliberate swindling and oppression'.<sup>12</sup> The solution to the rising demand of the African workers for political and economic rights was presented as involving 'the enlightened Natives' in consultation. The missionary report was fairly representative of the bourgeois view of the African working class in the towns which sought to enforce further restriction on the permanent working class (while making some reforms to separate them from other sections of the working class) and to cement the migrant worker to the homesteads in the countryside after completing labour in the towns.

These considered opinions of bureaucrats and bourgeois ideologists in the field (the missionaries) provided no evidence that evolutionary change and amelioration of the impoverishment of the African working people was on the agenda; the war served internationally and internally to exacerbate national and racial antagonism. It also led, however, to the expansion of the African working class and the acceleration of resistance to imperialism with the October 1917 Revolution in Russia.

### Working class resistance and African nationalism

Towards the end of the war and in the immediate aftermath, the African working class asserted its strength in a number of strikes and demonstrations against the pass system. In this period before the growth of the mass Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) the workers looked particularly towards the African petty bourgeoisie for leadership in the struggle for higher wages and political rights, and the International Socialist League (ISL) which carried out agitation among African workers although basically orientated towards the white labour movement. The South African Native National Congress established in 1912 to represent the political aspirations of the African people took up the leadership of the African workers' resistance to the pass system and poverty wages particularly in Johannesburg. The workers' relationship to both the SANNC leaders and the white socialists was ambiguous; the radicals among the SANNC were deeply influenced by the ISL propaganda and led public meetings, but withdrew when the workers moved on to the offensive as in the 1920 miners' strike. The ISL propaganda was warmly received by the African workers, but in turn the organization was split by differences on the approach to the African working class and did not provide the crucial leadership during strike action (although members were charged with provoking African workers into taking action).<sup>13</sup> The relationship between the ISL and the SANNC, cooperative in the immediate post-war period in the Transvaal, became uneasy thereafter as the socialists turned towards the white labour movement and the African leaders to reforms within imperialism.

Working class action in Durban in this period reflected these ambiguities and tensions to a lesser extent than in the Transvaal. The most prominent local African leader, J.L. Dube, had been elected President of the SANNC in 1912 deliberately because of the devastation which had been dealt to Africans in Natal after the Bambata Rebellion.<sup>14</sup> Dube had, however, kept a considerable distance from the uprising and his views did not become more radical over time. In accepting the Presidency he wrote of a 'hopeful reliance in the sense of common justice and love of freedom so innate in the British character' and in the same year spoke of Africans coming before the Government not with assegais but respectfully as loyal subjects.<sup>15</sup> He also expressed his belief in the principle of segregation at a later date. Yet by the end of the war Dube was to champion the position of African workers in Durban and to lead a campaign for higher wages.

Wickens in describing the early growth of the ICU writes that Durban was the only major seaport that did not produce an African trade union in the post-war period or any major working class action. While it is undoubtedly true that Durban did not experience the combativity of the dock strike in Cape Town in 1919 which provided the impetus for the growth of the ICU as a mass organization, or the street fighting of Port Elizabeth in 1920, it was not innocent of strike action. There were a number of strikes, more than detailed by Wickens, but it is true to say there was no decisive struggle as in the two ports mentioned or in the Transvaal with the tremendous strike of African miners in 1920. Rather there was a series of strikes to which Dube responded by starting a campaign of petitions by workers for voluntary wage increases as an alternative to strike action. The lack of formation of a trade union in Durban during this period has been ascribed by Wickens to several reasons 'none very convincing': that the Zulu people were cowed by the suppression of the Bambata rebellion, that there was no Zulu leader capable of organizing the workers, that the Indian community tended to keep to itself, that the workers were 'less committed' to urban life, and finally that

the municipality was particularly repressive.<sup>16</sup> The huge growth in the ICU which took place in the mid-1920s demonstrates effectively that the African working people had not accepted the brutal repression of the struggle in the countryside as a defeat in the cities and the lack of a foundation of working class organization has to be explained in terms of the limited objective and equivocal leadership of the struggle for higher wages and against national oppression. There was very little propaganda for African workers and nothing like the scale of work done by the ISL in Johannesburg and Dube did not see any necessity for working class organization; his role was limited to that of interceding with the authorities. His interests were primarily educational, on the lines of moral and self-improvement, based on the ideas of Booker T. Washington, and he was not one of those leaders of the SANNC influenced by syndical or socialist ideas. The campaign for higher wages did not lead to permanent organization of the working class or even mass membership in the Natal Native Congress, but it did demonstrate that the African workers were capable of breaking new ground in struggle in advance of the leadership. And in doing so the workers showed they had absorbed lessons on working class tactics from organized white workers.

While employment expanded during the war, the working class in South Africa suffered particularly from the sharp rise in prices, especially of food. As in other areas, African workers came out on strike for increased wages on a number of occasions. As the missionaries noted, African workers were particularly affected by rising prices and were deeply conscious that they were being exploited. Working class action centred on the dock workers but also included other disparate groups such as ricksha pullers and even the municipal police, the lead tending to come from the dock workers who were employed on a daily basis outside of the Master and Servants Act. Dube's relationship to demands for higher wages was not immediately clear; it was only with the initiation of strike action that his intervention began.

The first open indication of action taken by African workers in support of the demand for higher wages came with the strike of ricksha pullers in Durban in protest against a proposed increase of the charge made by ricksha owners for renting the vehicles from 10s to 12s per week. On 15 April 1918 the ricksha pullers refused to take out their vehicles at the increased charge. Dube led a march of 1,200 ricksha pullers to the office of the Municipal Native Affairs Department.<sup>17</sup> Deeply sensitive to the possibility of strike action on the scale experienced on the Rand, the Mayor, J. Nicolson, immediately contacted the ricksha owners and persuaded them to withdraw the increase. He then told the workers that in an 'European town the assembling of large bodies of Natives was undesirable because it was subversive of proper order'. The workers were told that the proper method of representation would have been for a small number of chosen spokesmen to put the case on behalf of all the workers and they were warned not to take part in demonstrations. Dube expressed the appreciation of the ricksha pullers for the settlement and 'no discussion was necessary'.

This first action taken by African workers was essentially defensive in character but may have stimulated further dissatisfaction with the low level of wages. Many large firms received demands from African workers for wage increases. According to Nicolson, these firms granted increases ranging from 10 to 15 per cent on the wages previously received. The demands of the workers were well in advance of whatever upward adjustment employers were prepared to make to wages, the togt workers demanding a virtual doubling of their wages. The level of wage demand was evidence of the deepening of the workers' consciousness of their exploitation well in advance of the 'trade union' demand for compensation for rising prices to their pre-war value. The togt workers led in taking independent action in demanding higher wages. On 24 June 1918, a deputation of togt workers went to the Native Affairs Department saying they had been guided by the advice given by the mayor in presenting demands for pay increases. They demanded an increase in wages

to 5s per day for work performed during the day, and 10s for a night shift. The approach to the Native Affairs Department also seems to have been dictated by the municipal regulations laying down the minimum wages for togt labour.<sup>18</sup> The officials then arranged a meeting between the employers and the deputation.

Before the meeting took place on 26 June 1918 a preliminary meeting was held between the officials and employers which provides insight into the local state under capitalism. The Native Affairs Department under pressure from the workers' demands assumed the task of organizer of the local state and the employers, its class content determined by the tactical action taken to unify the employers and repel the workers' demands.<sup>19</sup> The employers and the municipal officials felt the claims of the workers were exaggerated as they were said to earn more than many other workers. Before the deputation of five togt workers met with employers and officials of the municipality it was conspiratorially agreed to listen to the workers' demands but then to turn them down flatly. It was decided to set up a sub-committee of the Town Council consisting of the mayor and employers of togt labour who would preside at the meeting and then tell the workers: 'You have not made out a sufficient case for an increase'.<sup>20</sup> Marwick, head of the Native Affairs Department was given the authority to coordinate a defence of the employers against the increasing demands for higher wages. An employer of a large number of togt workers and a councillor, R. B. Nicol, was put in charge of the meeting with the workers' delegates. As pre-arranged, the workers were listened to but no concessions at all were offered. The delegates reported back to the togt workers and advised them to stage a strike. Their advice was rejected, however, and instead a collection was made to engage a lawyer to plead their case, an instance which tends to counter a popular conception of reformist leadership and a militant rank and file.<sup>21</sup>

It was at this point that the mayor felt the matter of wages had become a political matter, as there was a widespread demand for increased wages. Following the bold claims of the togt workers he claimed that Dube had become the agitator behind the demands for large wage claims. In a leader entitled 'The Money Famine' in Ilanga lase Natal, Dube outlined a strategy for securing higher wages and criticized the togt workers for acting by themselves. 'If certain bodies only are going to make representations, the weight of the Africans' voice and needs will not be noticed. We cordially welcome one of the resolutions of the Natal Native Congress which met at Pietermaritzburg last week, and resolved to bring to the notice of General Botha, the fact that all Native Servants wish to have their wages increased on account of the high cost of all commodities, and that he should submit this fact to all European employers.'<sup>22</sup> The editorial itself and the subsequent actions of Dube did not confirm the complaint of the mayor that Dube was agitating for wage increases, but rather that he was proposing a strategy for increasing wages by pleas to the authorities rather than strike action. In contrast to the strategy of the advanced workers in putting forward substantial wage demands and suggesting strike action, Dube proposed a 'political' strategy of petitioning the capitalist state to urge wage increases from employers. He criticized the Point togt workers for 'going it alone' as all African workers wanted their wages increased, and so appeared justified in claiming to act on behalf of the interests of all African workers in making proposals for getting concessions from the employers.

Dube had followed up his editorial by calling a meeting of African workers in the name of the President of the Natal Native Congress. All heads of gangs, indunas, workers, domestic servants, storemen, and stablemen were called upon to send their delegates to him to arrange a mass meeting to agree on one resolution. About 800 African workers attended a meeting on 27 July 1918, and since it was found to be difficult to formulate a resolution at the gathering, Dube asked the indunas of gangs to remain behind and set

out a resolution demanding an increase in wages. This suggestion and the resolution which followed showed Dube's conservative approach which stressed the acceptance of the hierarchical control of the workers through the indunas at work and the chiefs in the reserves. The final resolution proposed action on two fronts: directly through demands for pay increases from employers, and indirectly by asking all chiefs to petition the government for a pay rise. The wage demands were for 2s a day for togt workers who provided their own food and slept in quarters for which they paid rent, and a 1s increase for all workers receiving food and quarters. It was decided to present these demands to the government through the Secretary for Native Affairs, and to the Mayor of Durban, the Chamber of Commerce, and to employers of gangs.<sup>23</sup> Apparently referring to the stevedoring workers who were considering strike action, Dube repeated it 'would be the height of folly' to do so before the employers had received notice of the general grievances of the workers and the answers had been made known. The contact with the workers was evidently radicalizing for Dube, the question of strike action not being totally dismissed. A strike would, however, require much organization because unless it was prepared for, disunity would result as some workers would be on strike while others would continue working. He suggested that the stevedoring and railway workers keep in contact with him by selecting a representative each to discuss building up a fund.

As the demands of the workers mounted on a coordinated basis the local bourgeois press blamed the International Socialist League, which was active on the Rand, for the growth of organized agitation.<sup>24</sup> In response to this accusation and to distance himself from any agitation on a socialist basis, Dube called a meeting on 10 August 1918. At this meeting he repudiated any connection with the Johannesburg socialists (with whom the Transvaal Native Congress was working) and distributed the printed petitions calling for increases in wages as agreed to by the resolution. But at the meeting Dube came in for criticism as well as praise. There had been a number of small

strikes taking place after the meeting on 26 July at which the workers had demanded an increase of 30s per month, a demand identical to the resolution but expressed in terms of a monthly wage.<sup>25</sup> Dube had been called in by the Chief Magistrate after hearing that the Point workers were considering coming out on strike on Monday, 12 August, if Dube was unable to report satisfactory results, and warned against continuing agitation which led to strike action. At the 10 August meeting Dube repeated the Chief Magistrate's warning to the workers and appealed to them not to strike 'as their doing so might have serious consequences'. This caution after the somewhat more radical suggestions immediately after the earlier meeting was not well received by the workers. Workers who reported on some success in achieving higher wages also said they had stopped work to make their demands and in some cases this had led to wage increases. The critical attitude of some workers to Dube became most evident when further contributions were called for. One speaker objected to making any further donations and wanted to know when definite action would be decided upon. He asked whether the funds would be completely run down before anything was done. Dube responded by saying his purpose in life was to 'serve the Native' and he did not think the workers would expect him to carry the expenses of work on their behalf. He had consulted a lawyer before drawing up the petition, had had notices printed, would need to travel to Pietermaritzburg to see the Chief Native Commissioner, and to Pretoria to see General Botha. The questioner represented a group of workers who were impatient with the slow development of the wage campaign and suspicious that Dube was using the funds for his own purposes. After putting the brakes on independent action by advanced sections of the African working class in favour of united action, Dube was being seen as unable to provide a strategy which would provide a decisive lead to the workers.

While the workers were increasingly expressing doubts about a policy of caution and petitioning, the ruling class was increasingly alarmed by action

by the working class, although there were differences of opinion between the conciliationists concerned with maintaining some substance to bourgeois rights, and the repressionists who followed a policy of extreme action against the African proletariat. The Natal Mercury sounded the alarm for the conciliationists by repudiating the decision of the Johannesburg magistrate who sentenced striking African sanitary workers to two months harsh imprisonment. His attitude was a 'glaring example of how not to deal with trouble of this kind', the editor wrote. 'We simply cannot afford to live on bad terms with the swarming mass of Natives.' The conciliationists were concerned that African workers would be influenced by socialists whose aim was 'to paralyze the trade and industries of South Africa'. Employers should respond to the reasonable demands of African workers to 'render powerless' those who 'intrigue to unsettle the minds of the Natives'.<sup>26</sup>

From the evidence of the letter of the Mayor to General Botha, the conciliationists were the weaker party. According to Nicolson, a limited number of employers were prepared to consider a 'reasonable' request for a small increase in pay, but all employers were united in denying any increases occasioned by the resolution at the mass meeting. 'There is a strong feeling that any civil commotion among the Natives such as this deadlock portends would be most harmful at the present juncture, and that the Government should indicate clearly and firmly that any trifling with the dangerous situation which exists, will not be permitted.' Being unable to understand social phenomena apart from the operation of individuals, Nicolson accused Dube of having come to the town with the objective of setting African workers against white employers. Many African workers had stopped work en masse to make their demands to employers, and had only resumed work provisionally until the end of the month.

The mayor was particularly concerned about reports of an impending strike at the docks. He made this the key issue in attempting to get General

Botha to take action against Dube. 'In view of the serious possibilities which would result not only to private enterprise and householders in Durban, and public services, but to the even more important question of shipping and landing at the Port should a Native strike be precipitated, I have been asked to press upon your notice the immediate need for some action being taken which will put a stop to the agitation and hostility, which is being fermented in Durban by Dube.'<sup>27</sup> After the reported threat of the dock workers to strike on Monday, 12 August 1918, the strategic implications of a disrupted port during a period of war were given prominence and the position was reported to the Chief Native Commissioner in Pietermaritzburg and the Acting Chief Magistrate in Durban.

Two strikes of dock workers followed, but they did not take the form of a violent explosion or a protracted struggle. The strikes took place not among the togt workers who had led the workers' demands in the meeting with employers of 26 June 1918, but among monthly employed coaling workers. The first strike involved workers of Associated Stevedoring and Landing Company who refused to work at 0500 on Wednesday, 14 August. The strike took the form of a broken series of confrontations with the compound manager, Robert Stainbank; initially 27 workers refused to start work. Stainbank rejected the workers' demand and told them it was neither the time nor place to ask for an increase. He managed to persuade 24 to go to work and took the remaining 3 to be charged by the Water Police under the Masters and Servants Act. While Stainbank was at the police station a further 100 workers struck. He managed to cajole some into returning to work after taking them to the police station, but eventually 21 workers were brought before the court. Although Stainbank argued he had not received any wage demands from the workers, the accused said they had handed in Dube's petition. They complained of rising prices, particularly of the coats and trousers they had to buy to work in coaling. The Acting Chief Magistrate was severe. 'He saw the petition in front of him, but it did not contain anything, for it was

signed only by Dube who had nothing to do with the matter before Court and had no right to intervene between them and their employers'. The accused had not adopted a 'constitutional' method of presenting their grievances but had put forward their demands in 'an insolent and defiant manner'. With these harsh words he said he was dealing with them 'leniently' but hoped the case would warn others 'not to show themselves to be led away by agitators'. The workers were fined £1 with the alternative of 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>28</sup>

Not being able to believe that African workers were capable of independent action, the bourgeois press claimed the strike was the 'result of ... mischievous leadership', and called on employers not to acquiesce to the demands the workers had been 'incited' to make.<sup>29</sup> A further strike took place apparently on Saturday, 17 August 1918. On this occasion workers employed in coaling by Associated Stevedoring and Messrs. R. Nicol and Co. of the Point refused to work overtime after lunch on Saturday and demanded overtime rates for Saturday afternoons. They were arrested and taken to court where they were fined £1. 'The Magistrate found much fault with them, saying that they were monthly employees and should not therefore break up their work in such a way, particularly in these times of war at the Point where coal is loaded.'<sup>30</sup> The employers offered to pay the fines if the strikers would agree to return to work. Although, as Dube had warned, there was not complete agreement among dock workers on the form of action to take and the strike did not lead to a victory, it showed that the workers were determined to resist even if this meant some workers had to lead and fail in their objectives.

These strikes were followed by a meeting of municipal officials and employers on 30 August 1918 which aimed at stiffening the resistance of employers against the widespread wage demands after administrative action had been taken to silence Dube. The Chairman of the Native Affairs and

Police Committee of the Town Council told employers not to concede to the demand for 1s a day increase. The communication with General Botha had evidently brought some strengthening of the employers' position: he announced that the Resident Magistrate had forbidden Dube to have further meetings without his consent, and that Dube had left Durban to make personal representations in Pretoria. Employers of African labour were instructed to listen to Marwick, the head of the Native Affairs Department, on the issue of wages as 'no one (was) better able to size up the Native'. Marwick reported that further increases had been requested by railway workers and employees of Randles, a commercial firm; but he appealed to employers to act unanimously in the matter of wage increases.<sup>31</sup> He said that Dube had protested strongly against the magistrate's ruling and had urged the workers to continue their demands. Dube had collected £4 9s from railway workers and £2 15s from Randles' employees to set up a fund to press the wage claims.<sup>32</sup> Some of the employers had already started to carry out victimization of the 'ringleaders' of the workers, and these men had to struggle to get other employment as their passes had been endorsed by their former employers. (This is only one of the many ways in which the pass system is used by employers and the state to maintain control over African workers, and here it served as a valuable auxiliary power to the social power of dismissal.) Marwick reported that the wage demands were being further impelled by the increase in taxation in the reserves; the hut tax had been increased from 14s to 19s by an addition of 5s dipping tax. To the fire of inflation was being added the fuel of added taxation.<sup>33</sup> Although not contradicting the proven need of African workers for higher wages, Marwick strongly urged employers not to allow any increases. The employers were, however, clearly worried and some had made elaborate plans to break strikes when they occurred. The Divisional Superintendent of Railways, Carr, said that two weeks previously 500 workers had presented Dube's petition for an increase in 1s a day even though they had been granted an increase in February. He had made arrangements to completely replace the workers if they struck by bringing in 2,000 workers to Durban if necessary.<sup>34</sup>

With Dube curbed and the workers facing larger fines and imprisonment for striking, the momentum of the wage campaign slackened. Dube's relationship with the workers brought out the ambiguity of the African petty bourgeoisie's relationship with the workers; while Dube exercised courage in calling the meetings and signing the petition he also repudiated the strike weapon and encouraged the workers' dependence on himself. While undoubtedly aware of the formation of the Industrial Workers of Africa on the Rand, he was unwilling to assist in building the permanent organization of the workers or to conduct agitation. To the contrary, it seems as though he used the wage campaign as a base for establishing himself as the spokesman for all Africans in Natal to the highest authorities. When challenged by the state he seems to have stopped the public role he was playing in attempting to coordinate the wage campaign.

#### Independent working class action on wages

The withdrawal of Dube from the wage campaign after being warned by the magistrate to stop holding meetings, opened the field for the ISL which could bring out propaganda without disrupting the original wage campaign. The first decisive intervention by the ISL in the Natal area was not, however, on the issue of wages but a pamphlet explaining the October 1917 revolution in the Soviet Union and calling on workers to unite. The pamphlet, entitled 'The Bolsheviki are coming', argued that the war between nations had been replaced by class war and that the Bolsheviki were leading the struggle for the rule of the working class. The capitalist press, it explained, slandered the Bolsheviki because 'they have lost the rich mines and factories which the Russian working men are now working for themselves', and were frightened workers in South Africa would follow this example. Calling for workers' control, it exhorted workers to combine in workshops: 'Combine as workers, no matter what colour'. In essence it argued for united working class action by white and black within one mass organization 'irrespective of craft, colour or creed'.<sup>35</sup> Implicit to the call for organization was a syndicalist conception

of working class unity, breaking down the barriers between skilled and unskilled, black and white, as a basis for the struggle for social and political emancipation. Starting from this premise its weakness was an inability to develop resistance to national oppression as the basis for mobilizing the African working class, but this did not impair its popularity nor the alarm it caused the ruling class.

The authors, D.I. Jones and L.H. Greene, were charged with contravening war regulations in publishing and distributing a pamphlet 'calculated to create alarm or excite public feeling', as well as other similar offences.<sup>36</sup> The main thrust of the prosecution was that the pamphlet had given rise to disturbances in Pietermaritzburg and Durban, that it had been printed in Zulu and Sesuto, and that unity between black and white was subversive of the colour line. Although it was said the pamphlet 'went off like a damp squib' in Pietermaritzburg (although there had been a scuffle in this town), the situation in Durban was volatile and it had caused great excitement.<sup>37</sup> There was a wide variety of witnesses against the accused, including Marwick, the censor of publications, police officers, employers, and Josiah Gumede, the secretary of the Natal Native Congress and editor of Ilanga lase Natal. There were, however, divisions within the judiciary and the senior civil servants which mirrored the arguments of the conciliationists and repressionists in the town councils and press. The censor, for example, said he did not have to see the pamphlet as Africans had the right to organize. Marwick was an advocate of the strong line of repression. He gave evidence that he had been doing 'political' work among African people since 1903 and that the effect of the pamphlet was to cause excitement and create alarm. Specifically, he blamed strike action at the Point on the distribution of 'a pamphlet containing false representations' which caused much dissatisfaction among the workers.<sup>38</sup> He argued that although the African workers had the right to organize, as the censor had acknowledged, 'it would be dangerous for them to exercise that right unless it were possible to keep them under very strict

control'. Because the pamphlet had been written in Zulu it was worse because it would be better understood. Although Africans were 'strictly speaking' not oppressed, he felt that any explanation of the Native Land Act would cause 'curiosity, disquiet, and uneasiness'. He accepted that African people were becoming impoverished, but argued this was because of the thriftlessness of the workers, although 'he is not entirely to blame for his impoverishment'. For the local ruling class the most alarming issue was expressed by the censor. The pamphlet encouraged the workers to seize the mines and 'if they did that with the mines it (sic) would do the same thing with the sugar and wattle plantations!'.<sup>39</sup>

The prosecution's strongest argument was the evidence presented by African witnesses. Some said the pamphlet might provoke disorder and bring back the days of Tshaka.<sup>40</sup> Josiah Gumede thought that the African people would be reduced to slaves if the Bolsheviks took over the Government. He feared a republic and placed his faith in British military power. The magistrate supported the policy of repression. He held that the pamphlet was libellous, treasonable, and indeed diabolical; 'while the idea that a South African Lenin might conceivably be a Bantu suggested lunacy'. Both Greene and Jones were sentenced to a fine of £75 and four months' imprisonment. On appeal the sentence was set aside. In their defence the accused argued their aim had been 'to avoid on the industrial field the territorial strife of the pioneer and tribal days', and this statement constituted a partial retraction of the revolutionary propaganda of the pamphlet. It was possibly this moderation which led the judge to conclude that the pamphlet did not advocate an armed insurrection and could have had no effect on the prosecution of the war.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the inspired exhortation to black and white workers to unite and organize, the pamphlet did not provide an immediate strategy forward for African workers. The Industrial Workers of Africa, which had been formed on the Rand in 1916, was not mentioned nor the wage issue which was the

burning question of the moment. In the apparent absence of any further propaganda and organization of African workers by the ISL, the workers moved into strike action spontaneously some time after the pamphlet had been distributed. As with the wage campaign conducted by Dube, the ISL propaganda failed to develop permanent organization among the workers although there was undeniably a receptive mood among African workers, particularly dock workers, in Durban.

Following the incidents of August 1918 which were repressed by threat of dismissal, and charged of contravening master and servants legislation, the dock workers held back on further action while raising their wage demands. Early in July 1919 there had been evidence of a 'nasty spirit' when the municipality had distributed gifts of meat as part of the peace celebration to dock workers. The feeling of the workers had been: 'We don't want your meat, we want more money'. In at least one case the meat was thrown into the street. The local magistrate found this a difficult problem to deal with as, ironically, 'apparently the Natives have the right to refuse a free gift'.<sup>42</sup> A wage dispute soon followed with workers, again those employed by Nicol and Company, coaling contractors to the railways, coming out on strike on 16 July. The workers marched to the Native Labour Office of the Railways in a group of about 500 and demanded an increase of 4s 6d per day over their present wages. This wage demand was a considerable increase over the 2s a day increase demanded in August 1918. The strikers refused to return to work before receiving a guarantee that there would be an increase in wages. It was arranged that a deputation would be received by the employers in the afternoon, and that none of those elected to present the grievances of the workers would lose their wages during the negotiations. The Divisional Superintendent of Railways, Carr (who had made plans for the replacement of strikers in 1918), and the manager of the Native Affairs Department, Marwick, met the deputation of 13 workers.

The delegates complained that the cost of boots and clothing had risen tremendously and they needed a wage increase to compensate; the added burden of the 5s dipping tax per kraal pushing them to desperation. In response, the employers tried to create the impression that the inflation was simply caused by the war, with the coming of peace prices would automatically return to pre-war levels. Carr argued that the price increases caused by four years of war were temporary, 'the soldiers were returning, which would mean that scarcity of clothes, etc, would gradually disappear, and prices would decrease in the course of time'.<sup>43</sup> The workers had been given an increase of 5s per month since the war had begun as well as extra rations. Since the rations were paid for by the railways, the workers housed free, he considered that the African workers 'had been very well treated' in comparison with white workers. He found the workers' demand 'preposterous'; they had entered into contracts with the railways and would be in breach of their contracts if they persisted in strike action. He instructed the delegates to resume work on the following morning and to advise the others to do the same. The talks continued until 1700, but the delegates then asked that the discussion be continued with the workers as a whole, as each individual worker had a grievance to discuss. This would have been to them the best means of countering the bourgeois arguments of the employers with the militant demands of all the workers without exposing themselves immediately to victimization.

The two spokesmen of authority, Carr and Marwick, moved in to the compound and put their viewpoint to the workers directly. The strikers were unimpressed, and were then told that if they wanted to take the matter further they would have to elect a deputation to the Chief Magistrate. The strikers responded by saying a deputation would be arrested, but Marwick and Carr gave the assurance that the delegates would be granted immunity and not lose their wages. The workers insisted that their demands should be conveyed directly to Pretoria. With growing anxiety and impatience the spokesmen

concluded the discussion by saying that if the workers continued in their demands 'their only course was return to work and give notice in the ordinary way'; the workers should resign. Obviously concerned that the dispute would turn into a protracted struggle, Nicol and Company rang up the Chief Magistrate of Durban to ask him to address the railway workers, rather than encourage the idea of a deputation to the Chief Magistrate. 'As I was anxious that nothing should mar the Peace celebration, and was aware that Nicol had the coaling of the Australian transport (with troops then in harbour) I agreed to go on condition that they brought Mr. J.S. Marwick along to go with me.'<sup>44</sup> Marwick was to prove invaluable; with his 'usual skill' he was able to draw information from the workers and prepare the ground for the address given by Binns.

By the time Binns arrived at the railway yards they had been occupied by a strong force of white and black police. Binns, whom the bourgeois press reported as having 'expressed a desire to address the men' rather than having responded to the urgent plea of the employer concerned, put the case of the employers from the legal point of view as a representative of the state. 'Having spoken to the natives, he said that those who wished to return to work could move to the right, and those who still desired not to work could move to the left.' This command, backed by the large complement of police, proved to be a brilliant strike-breaking tactic, as it succeeded in dividing the workers without even making any wage concession. A small group of workers decided to return to work and walked towards the workshops, but these were followed by militants carrying sticks who tried to dissuade them from breaking rank. The African police were called on to arrest these pickets and there was a brief scene of resistance. This attack on the strikers was, however, successful. The workers gradually drifted back to work with the exception of about a dozen. These militants were arrested and taken to the Police Court. They were severely reprimanded by Binns in his judicial role, discharged, and sent back to work. A force of mounted police was sent out to parade around the rail-

way premises along Ordinance Road at lunch time, and no further resistance was reported.<sup>45</sup>

Shaken by the determination of the workers and what were considered audacious demands, Binns ordered an investigation by the CID into the possibility of the workers having 'been got at by unscrupulous Europeans'. In the imagination of the ruling class African workers were thought to be incapable of independent thought and action, racism obscuring the understanding of elemental social forces. The Reverend B. L. Sigamoney, who had organized the Durban Indian Workers' Union and who was a leading member of the ISL, came under suspicion. He had organized Indian dock workers in his union and had been elected Vice-Chairman of a socialist conference held in Durban in October 1917 to debate the rival merits of 'pure' industrial action and parliamentary politics.<sup>46</sup> Sigamoney was, however, cleared by the CID of the accusation of inciting the workers; the actual relationship between the propaganda of the ISL and militant strike action by the dock workers remaining obscure.

The strike illuminated the extraordinary intimacy of members and organs of the ruling class, an insight which was certainly not lost on the striking workers. During a time of crisis, such as during the railway workers' strike, the close networks between particular employers, municipal officials, and representatives of the central government, were lit up starkly in the suppression of organized working class action. What was clearly evident in the actions of Marwick was the dependence of other state officials and employers on an intelligent specialist who could devise the overall strategy of the ruling class towards African workers and actively coordinate the employers' counter-offensive. In this sense the local state was 'on tap' to employers under pressure, and the Native Affairs Department developed as a strike-breaking agency possessing the practical wisdom of repression, such as providing for a character reference in the African workers' pass. In terms of the later

development of the capitalist state in South Africa, the magistrates took a very active part in using political and legal power against the working class; the crowning anomaly being the double role of the Chief Magistrate as 'strike-breaker of last resort' as well as the adjudicator in the court case involving the strikers. This 'simple' form of the capitalist state which tended to allow the separation of functions to become obscured in the immediate defence of particular capitalists was also its weakness; it tended to destroy any illusions of an impartiality in the state in the minds of the most oppressed section of the working class.<sup>47</sup>

The activity of the local state as an agency in enforcing a cheap labour policy was brought out most clearly in the discussions among all employers about the wages to be paid to municipal workers. The numerous meetings held between employers and officials and the constant attempt to get unity against the demands of the workers reinforces an idea of the capitalist state as a perpetual conspiracy against the working class; discussing in private, making minuted decisions, and having the salaried staff to enforce the decisions, in contrast to the workers compelled to discuss and act openly to secure their aims. The 'conspiratorial' view of the capitalist state is most clear during class struggles which pose a clear alternative between the interests of all employers and all workers, on other occasions during which the interests of different capitalists do not coincide, the smooth efficiency of the apparatus breaks down. The possibility of united counter-action against the demands of the working class is also limited by the power of strategically-placed workers to make a breach through the wall of opposition of the employers. The 'advanced party' in the wage struggles in Durban was to be the tog workers.

One of the major areas of difficulty the employers faced was that the municipality itself was a large employer of African workers; if it conceded any wage increases it would have the effect of putting pressure on wages generally in Durban. At a meeting of municipal officials and employers held on 12 Sep-

tember 1919, the strategy of holding the line on wage increases for African workers was again discussed. The meeting of the Mayor, Marwick, Gilbert (Chairman of the Native Affairs and Police Committee of the Town Council), the Railways, the stevedoring companies, and commercial firms, decided firmly that there should be no increase in the wages of municipal workers. At the same time it was reported that the togt workers were intending to use violence to compel other workers to join in a general strike to demand an increase in wages.<sup>48</sup> With these threats and uncertainties it seems as though the solid front presented by the employers was beginning to crumble. Marwick, who had been given the authority to consider all wage increases before giving his approval, reported that the SARH had granted an increase of 2s 6d per month from 26 October 1919.

Despite a general agreement that wages of municipal workers had to be held down, the demands of African municipal workers for wage increases persisted. By holding back any upward movement in wages, the municipality eventually laid itself open to strike action by quite diverse employees. The municipal workers demanded at least parity with the wages of other labourers in Durban. The togt workers employed by the City Engineering Department came out on strike on 8 November 1919. The Department employed 560 togt workers and many would be difficult to replace, and the Borough Engineer asked permission from the Native Affairs Department to increase the pay of the more experienced workers to 3s 6d a day. By this stage, many employers were paying this wage. Marwick adopted a tough stance against the strikers, warning them they would not be allowed to remain at the Stone Depot and should return to the togt barracks or be prosecuted and made to hand in their togt badges. Even the African police made an application for a considerable increase to their wages. They argued there had been a tremendous increase in the price of essential commodities and statutory payments; a bag of mealies cost £2, a blanket £1 10s, tax 19s, and rent to farmers varied between £1 10s and £2. The police were earning only £2 17s per month.<sup>49</sup> The municipality

held off from promising any wage increases until the agreement of other major employers had been received.

By the early 1920s the stone wall erected against wage increases was beginning to crack. Associated Stevedoring and Landing Company was paying its workers 4s a day, which compares with the demand made for 5s a day made in July 1918, although this wage was certainly more than earned by the monthly workers of the railways, engineering firms and commerce. At a meeting convened by the municipality on 27 January 1920 the mayor sought the approval of other major employers for an increase in municipal wages 'as the Council had no wish to increase Native wages and then find that other employers had to follow their example'. Again Gilbert, Chairman of the Native Affairs and Police Committee, appealed to employers to take concerted and coordinated action on African wages.<sup>50</sup> But the pressure of the workers' demands had ultimately broken through the collective resistance of all employers to an increase in municipal wages, and Gilbert was forced to acknowledge that these wages were below those paid generally in town. Some firms, he said, had actually doubled their African wages from 1918 to 1920. Marwick, who was once again paying close attention to Dube's columns in Ilanga lase Natal, sensed the danger of being completely obdurate; Dube was again giving prominence to the low level of African wages in Durban, and strikes were becoming general. Dube had emphasized the low wages, famine in the countryside, and strike action. 'Never a day passed but some body of men went on strike for more money, and very often they got it. The Natives were the only men who had not received more money.'<sup>51</sup> Cautiously viewing the possibility of widespread strike action on the scale suggested by the rumoured general strike to be led by the togt workers, Marwick said that Africans felt they were entitled to an increase in their present wages. Increased wages for municipal workers of a small amount (5s a month) were eventually approved.

The wage issue was by no means resolved by the piecemeal increases in wages made by employers under pressure from an increasingly militant working class, black and white. The year 1920 was one of a record number of strikes, in January 1920 alone the white tramworkers and municipal workers of Durban came out on strike, there were a number of strikes on the Rand and in Port Elizabeth. A strike by white municipal workers on 7 January brought all municipal services to a standstill for three days, and the strikers moved on to instal a board of control in the town hall; the workers' action being described as setting up a municipal 'soviet'. On the Rand a tremendous strike of African workers on the mines stopped work on twenty-two mines by 25 February. The 71,000 African miners who struck in support of their demands for wage increases of between 5s and 10s (about a 100-400 per cent increase) a day displayed a high degree of organization with pickets, cohesion and discipline.<sup>52</sup> These wage demands, if secured by the workers, would have spelt the beginning of the end of the cheap labour system and brought the African miners up to the wage level of the highest paid day labourers in South Africa: the dockers in Cape Town.<sup>53</sup>

These revolutionary demands provided a powerful incentive for African workers concentrated in compounds throughout South Africa to come out on strike.<sup>54</sup> In February 1920 290 of the municipal policemen who had carefully prepared their arguments in support of a substantial wage increase came out on strike.<sup>55</sup> The most determined battle against the cheap labour system came from the dock workers who had held back until this moment, although continually posing a challenge to the minimumizing wage policy adopted by the employers and the municipality. Early in March the dockers took disciplined action to enforce their demand of 10s a day for togt workers and £5 for monthly workers with increased rations and other benefits. Early on Friday, 5 March 1920, the dock workers came out on strike with tactics which clearly demonstrated a pre-arranged strategy. While some workers had already started work on the ships an organized mass picket armed

with sticks and stones moved into the docks from the Bell Street compound. Starting at A Shed and moving on to I Shed the pickets demanded all work stop until their demands of higher wages and more food were met. During the first rush half a dozen whites were involved in a confrontation but were not injured by the pickets. The strike was apparently centred around workers employed by the SARH and workers employed by a contractor to the railways.<sup>56</sup> The 193 workers employed by Union Castle Line were untouched, and a large number of other togt workers had offered themselves for employment that morning. 'At the same time they went about their work silently in contrast to their usual joviality, until police protection arrived.' Those who continued working on the ships were supplied with food at work rather than leaving the docks for a midday meal. Despite some workers continuing to stay on the ships it was reported that 'practically all shipping was disorganized' by the action of an estimated 1,000 strikers. The workers then proceeded to picket the sheds and entrance to the docks but did not interfere with Indian dock workers, some of whom carried on work on a few of the ships to keep some of the cranemen busy. Until midday it appeared that the strikers had the docks more or less under their control with hardly any work being done and the tally clerks being told to sign off for the day. But the workers' occupation of the docks was not to last out the day. At noon a strong posse of Water Police armed with revolvers accompanied by Borough African police changed the position.

The police worked with military precision to counter the daring offensive of the strikers. The force divided into three detachments, the vanguard advancing through each shed from A onwards, the other two flanking each side of the building until the strikers 'realized that control had passed out of their hands'. As the police advanced down Point Road from where they had started, many of the strikers filed out of the gate near H Shed, flinging down their sticks and stones without comment on the command of an African constable 'but looking very sullen'. The reason for the surrender was a recognition of

superior force in the form of the armed Water Police. Once the unity of the strikers had been broken the police and military grew in confidence. The South African Mounted Rifles soon followed, patrolling at a trot past the various entrances which had been strengthened by additional guards. Extra police had been drafted in from the district to guarantee that the strikers did not regroup and that there was no possibility of pickets being formed. With the strikers repressed, a thorough search of the Point compounds was made for weapons, but only a few sticks were found. When the strikers could be brought together they were addressed by McConachie, the Port Manager, and by Harris, a labour agent, near the offices, but 'with no definite result'. Although it was estimated that 20 workers were compelled by the breaking of the strike to resume work, the majority stayed in and around the compounds, rather dejected and not talking among themselves. Many of the workers applied for work on the following day (Saturday) and the remainder were expected to start work on Monday. There was no violence reported between the strikers and the police after the demobilization of the pickets and no arrests were made.<sup>57</sup> The strike had 'fizzled out', according to the Natal Mercury, because of the 'prompt action taken by the authorities'.

Although it is true that the dock workers' strike did not develop into a fighting strike on anything like the scale of the dock workers' strike in Cape Town in 1919 or the massive mine strike of 1920, the forward movement of the workers in attempting to occupy the docks and their bold demands counter Wickens' assessment that the workers' action was 'nothing of moment'.<sup>58</sup> What was specifically different from the struggle of African workers in Johannesburg and Cape Town was the absence of a stable propaganda group which would advocate the permanent organization of the workers; Dube's hostility to socialism was undoubtedly an important factor in the isolation of the Durban workers from the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA). Formed jointly by radical elements within the South African Native National Congress and the

ISL, the IWA had an important influence on the later development of mass organization among African workers.

The dock workers proved themselves to be the vanguard of the African working class during the war period and immediately after, by being prepared to take strike action despite strikes being described as 'sectional' and against the interests of the workers as a whole by African nationalist leaders such as Dube. In the existing circumstances of organized repression by employers and the state, advanced sections of the African working class had to decide to await the utopian conditions of free association or take up active resistance. Without strike funds, organized trade unions, or the support of the African petty bourgeoisie, the dock workers struggled intelligently to secure demands which were completely unacceptable to the capitalist class. In persisting in social resistance with these demands the dock workers were not demonstrating their utopianism but their practicality; their strikes were the only way the African working class could move into action in the absence of trade unions and political parties representing their interests.

### Beer, tax and organization

The fairly rapid increase in the African population in the cities as a result of expanded production during the war posed a number of challenges to the bourgeoisie's control over the working class and urban property. The increasingly scientific approach to the problem of control over the African working class which was evident both in Marwick's discussion of the appropriate forms of control in the towns and in the 'race relations' school of thought, was an attempt to develop a unified policy in the towns. Quite different forms of social and political control had developed in Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Durban, which were evidence of genuine differences in approach within the ruling class, differences which could only be resolved by the demonstrable superiority of a particular form of class rule. The 'Durban system', itself a product not of imagination but of responses to particular

struggles by the African working class (the demand for higher wages, family housing, for women to brew beer) was largely absorbed into national legislation, but then put to a most exhaustive test by the workers.

While the Native Affairs Act of 1920, which established a native affairs commission and strengthened the position of chiefs, was the most immediate response to the challenge of the black proletariat, the most weighty measure which has burdened the African workers with exacting bureaucratic control came somewhat later in the form of the Native Urban Areas Bill of 1923. While the African working people had resisted the municipal beer monopoly as it was an act of national and class oppression; both invoking racial regulations and serving to cheapen the labour power of the African workers; the Durban deputation to the Select Committee investigating the bill spoke strongly in favour. The bill itself was seen by bureaucrats who were paid with 'beer-money' as embodying large sections of the Durban system of beer monopolization. With some pride the bourgeois press reported: 'It was due to those fine men they had in the Native Affairs Department in Natal that the Natal system was largely followed in drafting the bill.'<sup>59</sup> Layman, manager of the municipal Native Affairs Department, wrote in January 1923 that the 'proposed measure provides for the administration of Native Affairs in urban areas under powers closely resembling those at present exercised by the Durban Town Council, and constitutes a basis upon which all Town Councils may model their Native Affairs bye-laws.'<sup>60</sup> He felt that the beer monopoly was a logical extension of the original principle of the togt system; that African workers should pay for whatever measures their rulers devised for their control and welfare. The principle that working people (the working class and peasantry) should be expected to contribute directly to the state is not unusual, although often fiercely resisted. What was peculiar to the 'Durban system' was the raising of revenue both from a labour tax (the togt labour registration fee) and more importantly by retrieving from the wage bill a large proportion of municipal revenue. By siphoning off revenue

through establishing a beer monopoly, the municipality was exacting a tax on the workers' means of subsistence. The beer monopoly had the added advantage to the bourgeoisie of cheapening labour power by slowing down the formation of African households in the towns, any income to African women being denied by the police in support of the monopoly in beer. For the Durban rate-payers and property-owners the system was particularly advantageous since municipal taxation in capitalist countries is usually based on property taxes. For the African workers the Durban system established a 'simple relationship' between their exploitation as wage workers and the superstructure of their oppression: they were contributing directly to the salaries of the bureaucrats and the wages of the police. The most powerful resistance to the national oppression of African people and the agents of that oppression, the Native Affairs Department and the police, would be based on an understanding of this process.

The inauguration of the beer monopoly was not without its contradictions for some employers and the missionaries, and required a decisive attack on African women in town. The rapid multiplication of beer outlets at the turn of the century had threatened some of the elements of the cheap labour; the growth of women as petty traders marked the possibility of an assertive black proletariat in the cities living in households outside of the rigorous controls of compound life. While beer brewing offered to women the possibility of material emancipation (the subordination of African women in tribal society being not as comprehensively developed as in feudal society), it also affected the sobriety of the African male workers, and the intensity of wage labour.<sup>61</sup> The opposition of African women to the beer monopoly would be based on the new relations of subordination to the domination of large-scale capitalist brewing and to the police who enforced the monopoly. This was their primary opposition to the monopoly. The secondary opposition of the women was to the reduction of their income from male workers, their wages being siphoned off to feed the oppressive 'Native' bureaucracy.

Although the African working class's opinion on the beer brewing was not sought, the toggt workers and ricksha pullers in particular were mentioned as being regular patrons of the municipal beerhalls. Their views were not likely to be identical to the African petty bourgeoisie deeply influenced by the Protestant ethic of the missionaries who advocated a teetotal society and strict discipline over African Christian converts. While the political spokesmen for the African petty bourgeoisie wavered between arguing for the 'national rights' of the African people to brew utshwala, or demanding complete abstemiousness from all people and a teetotal society, the overwhelming weight of opinion was in favour of prohibition. In arguing for prohibition many African political leaders were uncritically supportive of the demands for prohibition made particularly by the mining companies in the interests of squeezing out the maximum amount of labour time from the workers. All these factors were to have to surface in the resistance to beer monopoly and to make a difference between the African proletariat and petty bourgeoisie in the general opposition to the system.

From its inception the beer monopoly, as has been described in previous chapters, was accompanied by an attack on African women living in the town who became characterized as prostitutes, spongers, and illicit brewers by the ruling class. Maintaining the beer monopoly required the constant exercise of force against the workers and women, leading to the growth in the forces of repression in a 'self-perpetuating' cycle of repression and resistance. The beer monopoly itself achieved by a political decision by the ruling class did not automatically eliminate competition from the petty traders who were prepared to accept lower profit rates and to introduce a more intoxicating product: home-made spirits, like itishimiyane. Faced by the beer monopoly, the petty traders could compete by cheapening the means of subsistence. Spirits as a concentrated form of alcohol have been important in the proletarianization of the working class in Europe by cheapening the wants of the workers, and in South Africa beer and spirits brewing was

to be a decisive issue in the creation of the working class. The ability of the petty traders to compete with the beer monopoly depended both on the power of the state and the size of the market of the ever increasing employment of African workers in Durban. Even with incessant raids on petty traders and the provision of beer with official sanction, the petty trading sector was not completely eliminated. Out of these political and economic struggles the state grew relentlessly in coercive power feeding directly off the means of subsistence of the workers.

With the rapid growth of a market for liquor sales during the war period, the use of the police against the petty traders became increasingly urgent to maintain the monopoly. The demand for control evoked equal demands from the police for an expansion of the force to secure its, and the 'Native Affairs' bureaucracy's, income. It also brought about arguments about the relative share of the police and the bureaucracy in the spoils of the system. In response to the increasing resistance of the workers and petty traders to the discipline of employers and the state, the Native Affairs By-Laws were promulgated in 1916. The increasing use of the police against petty traders was concentrated on African women. It was simultaneously an attack on urban family life for the African working class. In evidence to the select committee inquiring into urban Africans prior to the Native Urban Affairs Act of 1923, the municipal officials gave details of action against African women in all its brutality. In support of the compounds as a means of accommodating and controlling workers and the beer monopoly, the municipal officials and the Borough Police had drawn up a list of all African women and men living together in poor areas of Durban. They warned the women to come to the Native Affairs office and took a statement from each one of them, forcing them to acknowledge they were living 'out of wedlock' with a man. The women were told to get out of town. 'In the majority of cases they were content to abide by instructions, and went home.' In the other cases where there was resistance the women were deported under escort.<sup>62</sup>

In carrying out these and other exacting tasks the police demanded larger grants.

While the political representatives of the property owners of Durban, benefiting from the beer monopoly, were united in support of the specialized bureaucracy of the 'Native Affairs Department' financed by 'beer money', fines and fees, they had to overcome two contradictions. The first, relatively minor, was the problem of some employers complaining of drunkenness among their workers and demanding strict control over the hours of selling utshwala. The second, more importantly, was the resistance of the workers to the whole apparatus of control transparently financed from taxes on their wages and monopoly profits on the means of subsistence.

For some employers the beerhalls posed the problem of keeping their workers sober and hard-working.<sup>63</sup> They were concerned that the availability of beer should not interfere with the workers' capacity to labour. In comparison with those missionaries who expressed public opposition to the beerhalls, the employers who were adversely affected limited themselves to working privately to modify beer drinking in their interests. The stevedoring companies who ordered a night shift to be worked were most affected by the expansion of the beerhalls, and in 1915 a manager of one of the companies complained that the stevedoring workers were coming to work drunk because the beerhalls were easily accessible. The response of the municipality to this complaint brought out clearly the question of whose interests were to be served by the state. As in the case of the Chamber of Mines which campaigned for total prohibition for African workers and succeeded in 1902 in the Transvaal, the stevedoring companies exercised similar powers even over a municipal enterprise.<sup>64</sup> The difference was that the stevedoring companies were more concerned about limiting rather than prohibiting liquor sales.

A compound manager of one of the leading companies, Associated Stevedoring and Landing Company, wrote to the Mayor early in 1915 asking for the beerhalls to be closed from 1600 to 1800. 'It is with our night boys that we get the most trouble', wrote R.H. Stainbank, 'and to have at least

twenty per cent off duty besides those who turn up considerably after time and completely unable to work through drink is a little too bad'. The workers left the barracks at 1700, he wrote, with the intention of getting to work, but called in at the beerhall and stayed talking and drinking longer than they intended. 'We may state that we have in our employment about 500 Natives and the manner and hours in which these people are supplied with beer is of great importance to the Company and to the Natives, as accidents in working occur through the Natives of the night shift being able to obtain beer just before going to work.'<sup>65</sup> Apparently the whole question of the opening hours of the beerhalls had been discussed with the stevedoring companies some three years previously when there had been complaints. The employers had argued that workers who had been on night shift waited until 0800 when the beerhalls opened and spent the morning drinking when their employers considered they should be sleeping. The municipality then changed the opening time to 1000. Again the employers complained there was too much drinking at the eating houses before the 1700 shift and the halls were closed at 1400 instead of 1600. The overseers of the eating houses were given instructions not to allow Africans to drink too long, and to 'give every assistance to employers in sending off their native servants who may be loitering about the eating houses'.<sup>66</sup> In each case of complaint the municipality had met the wishes of the employers, but in the complaint of Associated Stevedoring the officials were faced with a dilemma: they would suffer a great loss of income as between 1715 and 1930 was the busiest time of the day. In defence of the fundamental source of their salaries and the interests of the property owners as a whole, the municipal officials refused to make any further adjustments to the hours. Instead they offered to allow the stevedoring indunas into the beer section of the eating house to tell the men to leave on time. They blamed any drunkenness not on the open beerhalls but on the illicit liquor sellers, particularly déclassé whites.<sup>67</sup> Unsatisfied, Stainbank had to accept the over-riding interests of capital as a whole.

The primary contradiction between the racist authority of the ruling class and the workers took place in the arena of the struggle against the beer monopoly. The bitter conflict which this form of direct rule over the African working class took cannot, however, be understood outside of a discussion of the mass movement of the workers and peasantry: the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa.

### Dock workers and the ICU

Established in Cape Town in 1919, the ICU had a tumultuous growth as a national organization of the black oppressed claiming a membership of almost 200,000 in 1928.<sup>68</sup> Championing the resistance of the African working class to the multitude of laws and regulations burdening workers in the urban areas, and expressing the aspiration of the workers on the land for land rights and security of tenure, the ICU grew rapidly into a mass organization. The very pace of its development, however, makes it clear that the workers drawn into the organization in response to the populist leadership were very loosely 'organized' and that the speed of its motion was likely to shake the structure of its internal organization. Founded on a simple formula of mass organization equalling inspired leadership plus an undifferentiated following, the forward movement of the workers into the ICU did not lay the basis for permanent organization in the future. The attitude of the African working class was, however, not critically evaluative towards the ICU until its disintegration in the late 1920s; the initial response was one of enthusiasm and hope.

The ICU in Natal had a peculiar history. While Durban was one of the last major industrial centres to respond to the impetus of the organization, the workers joined with great determination and made the local branch one of the major contributors to the income of the ICU. The workers in Durban advanced from being characterized as 'backward' to being one of the advanced detachments of the ICU — all in a remarkably short time. When the ICU itself foundered, the workers in Durban, unlike in the early centres of ICU

activity, moved into political resistance. As South Africa entered the world-wide depression, Durban became described as the 'storm-centre' of the country, the workers continuing the struggles taken up by the ICU in the Communist Party or autonomously. In the centre of these unusual developments, the dock workers were absorbing the lessons of mass mobilization and of underground organization, at certain points having a decisive part in leading the resistance of all oppressed to the national and municipal laws and regulations. In coming out as the leading force against the beer monopoly, the workers adopted their own strategies and slogans which drew off the popular opposition to municipal rule, but added new content to this resistance and provided its vanguard.

In contrast to the other major industrial centres, the ICU was relatively slow to develop in Durban. Kadalie, the ICU leader, visited Durban in July 1925 on the invitation of the President of the Natal African Congress, J.T. Gumede, who assisted him as far as he was able. The editor of Ilanga lase Natal, the Reverend John Dube, who had retreated from the wage campaign of 1918 and the task of extending the Industrial Workers of Africa to Durban, was more cautious but not unfriendly.<sup>69</sup> Despite encouragement from Gumede, Kadalie was not optimistic about the possibility of mass organization. 'I must admit', he wrote, 'that my first impressions of Durban and the Zulu people were very disappointing. All seemed to be so tame and ready to submit to anything the official European suggested to them'.<sup>70</sup> When the municipal authorities refused him permission for holding a public meeting (a restriction which did not apply in the Cape or Johannesburg), Kadalie turned towards local liberals such as Mabel Palmer to get the ban temporarily removed. Legal obstacles such as these continued to dog the Durban branch of the ICU and possibly accentuated a tendency towards adopting a strategy of legal action to secure the rights of African workers. Despite the unoptimistic assessment of the mood of the workers in Durban by Kadalie, the ICU branch grew extra-

ordinarily rapidly under the leadership of Champion, a former police spy and mine clerk.

The strategy which Champion and the union leaders adopted, bringing such success to the Natal branch of the ICU, is difficult to disentangle from the welter of personality, political and regional disputes which engulfed the organization towards the end of the 1920s. Kadalie's style of leadership was based on oratory and mass meetings, tub-thumping speeches with rhetorical challenges to the state, a form of mobilization which was dependent on its tolerance by the state. Organization of workers within the factories, mines, and plantations; a political and industrial strategy, which set as its goals the socialist aims of its constitution to 'take from the capitalist the means of production, to be owned and controlled by the workers for the benefit of all',<sup>71</sup> was not seriously considered. Champion adopted a similar style of leadership to Kadalie: denunciations of racial oppression combined with repudiation of strike action, but added a keen ability to employ legal action in defence of African workers. These tactics have been discussed in the histories of the ICU only in the context of the costs involved and the frivolous litigation and counter litigation among the leaders in Natal, but Champion's enthusiasm for lawyers was embedded in the reformist strategy of the ICU as a whole. He possessed considerable insight into the potential contradictions in the ruling class between bourgeois rights and national oppression and exploited these contradictions adroitly. While he used his legal successes to fortify his image as a great leader of the African people and to hide the simple corruption of his administration (all ICU funds went into his personal bank account), legal defence was an important method of breaking through the plethora of laws and regulations weighing down the African workers.<sup>72</sup> Ironically the Durban municipality, which had pioneered the exact controls over the urban African population which were embodied in the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, proved to be surprisingly vulnerable to legal attack. Legal action secured the lifting of the curfew, the end of the dipping of Africans in disinfectant tanks, abolishing of character references

in pass books, and deprived the police of the power of arbitrary arrest of African people.<sup>73</sup> The strategy of legal action secured these important, though short-term advances, without compelling Champion to initiate any thorough industrial organization. Ultimately, virtually all these alleviations in the operation of national oppression were re-established in a re-written set of by-laws promulgated in terms of the 1923 Act, but the ICU's success in forcing back the relentless progress of state control over the lives and movement of the African working class secured its tremendous popularity.

The legal offensive which was combined with mass meetings at Cartwright Flats and the provision of entertainment facilities (apparently in Champion's own name) ensured a certain momentum to the ICU in Durban. These activities never quite coincided with the movement of the workers against the police and employers until the dramatic events of the beer boycott in 1929. The ICU in Natal, as elsewhere, did not pursue consistently the wage and political demands of the workers, or even the policy decisions decided upon at national conferences. When the workers, often members of the ICU, came out on strike they were either ignored or told to return to work, and the leadership prided itself on its responsibility. Early in 1927, after having communists expelled from the ICU, Kadalie declared that 'strikes were wicked, useless and obsolete'.<sup>74</sup> Unlike Europe, in which decisive class battles were being fought in the 1920s, the growth of the ICU into a mass workers' organization did not lead to a strike wave.<sup>75</sup> While raising the aspirations of the workers for a transformed society, the ICU leaders insisted on reformist tactics. Were it not for the success of the legal offensive, the split between the workers' actions and the tactics of the leadership would have become pronounced much earlier in Natal where there was undoubtedly militancy among the workers. The workers on white farms, in the docks, mines and factories in Natal were groping for a determined strategy against their employers and the oppressive state.

Soon after the establishment of a branch of the ICU in Durban there was evidence of a rising mood of resistance by African workers against grossly exploitative conditions of work, taxation, and the police. The most concentrated group of African workers, the dock workers, took the lead in these struggles which were to cause anxious moments for the ruling class and a turn towards armed resistance by the workers. One of the first signs of these new conditions were the cases of 'insubordination' at the Point. With management less able to control the workers through conventional methods, increasingly workers were being brought to court for resisting orders. In December 1925, a number of cases of insubordination among dock workers were brought to court and the workers sternly disciplined by the magistrate. In one of the cases the workers who refused to work under a white foreman who they complained tormented and assaulted them were fined £1 or fourteen days' imprisonment with hard labour. In another case seven dock workers on night shift refused to obey orders after they considered their work complete and had walked away towards the compound. One of the police witnesses argued the men were incapable of concluding they could go home once their work was done, 'it emanated from some superior person, probably from a member of the Union'.<sup>76</sup> The argument was both racist, implying that African workers were incapable of reasoning, and possibly incorrect, as there is no evidence that the ICU was taking up the industrial demands of the workers. The magistrate was clearly alarmed with the frequency of cases of small-scale resistance in the docks and lashed out at the workers. 'Who gave you the right to work when you like and go home when you like? I have had three or four of these cases within recent time from the Point and I look upon this as the climax.' He sentenced the workers to a fine of £2 or a month's imprisonment with hard labour, double the initial punishment.

There was further evidence of resistance early in 1926 when an African gang employed in road construction came out on strike in support of their demand to be paid. There was a heated argument between the workers and

employers and the police arrested 22 of the strikers. The strikers were brought before a magistrate and fined £1 or 14 days' imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>77</sup> These severe punishments did not blunt the opposition of the workers to their employers and the police in particular. Later in January it appears as though there was a pitched battle between the black workers, many of whom were ICU supporters, and the police. In a further court case three blacks were charged with interfering with the police. They were charged with ridiculing the police by removing a bicycle of one of the Borough Police and eventually found not guilty through insufficient evidence. The incident had shown that there was no love lost between the police and the black people. When the magistrate asked why no 'law-abiding' people had come to the aid of the police a police sergeant admitted the police were not popular in Grey Street (a racially mixed residential area) with black or white people. After the argument between the policeman and the accused had started, it had taken police reinforcements to restore order.<sup>78</sup> The police blamed the ICU which held mass rallies on Sunday at Cartwright Flats for the fight, they 'tell a lot of people that they are as good as a white man'. The newly-established branch was clearly making an impact both on the workers and the forces of order. The magistrate, Lava-piere, released the accused but denounced the 'preachers of rebellion' among African people; they would have to be dealt with.

The resistance in the docks continued with more workers being brought before the courts for discipline. In one notable case the workers employed at Cato Creek received national publicity for striking against their appalling conditions. These dock workers were employed from 0700 to 2230 to load the ships with 100 pound bags of sugar. They had come out on strike demanding wheelbarrows to carry the bags as their necks were sore. On being hauled before the magistrate, the prosecutor attacked agitators who told African workers to join the ICU and stand up for their rights. He demanded the court should take a 'strong attitude' against the strikers who

were told by the magistrate not to 'dictate to their masters' and were fined £1 or 14 days for refusing to work. After the case had been published by The Star, which represents the interests of monopoly capital, Kadalie voiced the protest of the ICU. The strikers were overworked and underpaid, but were not members of the ICU, he said.

I know of no greater impetus for the Natives organising industrially than that which has been provided by the publicity given this system under which human beings are treated worse than animals, for, be it remembered, the white man in his civilisation has deemed it but human to treat with kindness to animals which are, as a matter of fact, protected by law from ill usage. But not so the unfortunate Native. The task of hulking 100 lbs bags of sugar for a period of 15½ hours daily is, in terms of European civilisation, designated euphemistically employment, but in those of the true civilisation, which should know no barrier and be sacrosanct to none, it is persecution relentlessly waged upon a helpless race.<sup>79</sup>

This rather flowery denunciation of the conditions of the dock workers published in the workers' newspaper promised no immediate organizational support for the workers nor mentioned the policy on dock work decided on by the previous year's annual conference. The question had been fully debated at the Fifth Annual Conference in 1925. Delegates had resolved to extend the rate of pay of the Cape Town workers throughout other docks; 8s a day. Although this wage was 'altogether inadequate to provide the workers with the necessary (sic) of life', this wage demand was a preliminary to securing better conditions in Cape Town. The delegates also demanded special rates for handling heavy cargo such as sulphates and guano.<sup>80</sup> This important industrial strategy was not mentioned by Kadalie nor adopted by the local branch. While Kadalie denounced 'European devilry' he also described the workers as 'helpless', an attitude which tended to smooth over the contradictions between an increasingly active African working class and a leadership which was incapable of deciding on a strategy of agitation and national industrial organization. Instead of raising the question of support and organization Kadalie wrote poetic praise of spontaneity: 'The worm that

is trodden on does not react to the influence of the agitator but to natural impulse, and so in the case of the Cato Creek men ...<sup>81</sup>

The ICU failed not only to develop systematic agitation around the industrial demands of the workers but also in the political resistance of the African working class. When the various tax laws affecting Africans were consolidated in the Native Taxation and Development Act No 41 of 1925 a general tax of £1 was levied on every male African. In addition there was a local tax of 10s a hut up to a maximum of £2.<sup>82</sup> These new regulations meant an increase in tax for Africans in Natal and in the Cape, but the administrators considered the extra burden had not added much to the resistance of African workers.<sup>83</sup> For the impoverished majority in the cities, reserves and white farms, the poll tax was not only an added burden which reduced their ability to demand higher wages, but also an oppressive measure of inferiority. The dock workers in Durban were to prove most resistant to this attempt to squeeze further revenue from their earnings and encouraged other workers to boycott the poll tax. As the police stepped up arrests in a drive to increase revenue the workers responded by threatening to strike. The dock workers finally took strike action on 16 June 1927 to secure the release of their comrades who had been arrested for tax offences. On this day the workers started work as usual but soon began to leave the ships, first in two's and three's, and eventually in large batches until only White workers were left. This action had been prearranged and was the result of a meeting which was held the previous day after about twenty workers had been arrested. 'We protest against the arrest of thirty of us for not paying the Poll Tax', the workers said, 'And we shall not return to work until they are released.' This decisive action by the workers posed a dilemma for the authorities as it challenged the police powers of arrest by stopping production. 'The situation looked indeed ugly when Colonel Herschell, the Harbour Manager, came on the scene and pushed his way through the throng', reported the Natal Mercury. Herschell responded by

offering the workers no compromise; he told them bluntly that if they continued to strike they would be paid off and locked out of the compounds. He offered them no remedy for their demand: 'I always pay my tax, why should you not do the same?' If the workers did not pay the Poll Tax they would all be prosecuted, he promised.<sup>84</sup> With the full power of the employers and the police arrayed against them, the workers chose to return to the ships. The lesson drawn by the bourgeois press was that a tough response to the workers' demands was the best way of maintaining control.

The dockers' action, which led the resistance of the African people to the Poll Tax, was followed by strikes of African workers on the Natal coal fields, many of whom were ICU members. To both these strikes the ICU officials denied responsibility and even declared that the coal strikes were illegal.<sup>85</sup> With this questionable leadership it is surprising that the ICU continued to expand; the Natal membership rose to 45,487 in 1927, reaching at its highest point an estimated 52,800.<sup>86</sup> But the ICU in Natal had approached its zenith and was soon to show a marked decline. By the end of 1927, Durban, described by Wickens as the 'milch cow of 1926-27', started to dry up. Subscriptions fell continuously after reaching a peak as early as April/May 1927. The sudden decline in the ICU branch was due not only to the complete repudiation of the workers' actions, but also to two great financial scandals which came to a head in November 1927. These precipitated a crisis between the Natal branch and head office and spectacularly between the overweening personalities of Kadalie and Champion. The result was that Champion seceded from the national organization to set up a regional ICU yase Natal, an organization he could securely control. Faced with the possibility of the ICU declining to a shadow of its former strength, Champion adapted himself to new strategies of survival, apparently looking more towards the settled African proletariat.

### Champion, togt workers, and the beerhalls

Once proved successful, the beer monopoly was extended throughout the urban centres of Natal. The further it advanced, the greater became the resistance it engendered, as it pressed heavily on the African women's insecure position in the towns and threatened the workers with a stronger state. When the Sydenham Local Administration and Health Board, a local authority within the municipal area of Durban, decided to impose the beer monopoly in its area, Champion took up the leadership of the African opposition. When the togt workers entered the fray this opposition took a decidedly different form which threatened this basis of municipal control over African workers.

Before entering into the dispute in Sydenham, Champion had been active in complaining that there was no location provided in Durban despite the large profits from the beer monopoly. He had organized a petition to the Prime Minister protesting against the 'Durban system' and compound accommodation, which had been signed by 500 men and women. These protests had drawn out the connection between the beer monopoly and the apparatus of the Native Affairs bureaucracy.<sup>87</sup> Protests against the extension of the beer monopoly followed logically; meetings were held in Sydenham and the residents complained they had not been consulted. On 4 May 1929 Champion wrote to the Sydenham authorities protesting against the proposed extension of the monopoly.

We protest against any Local Health Board making attempts to obtain monies from the low paid natives for the purpose of financing their funds for their own advancement, at the expense of the voiceless members of our Community who have suffered untold pains at the hands of certain people who are out to make them a football (sic). We object to have our growing people to be taught by Europeans to drink Kafir beer. We feel that this is the step destined to deteriorate our race if all the surrounding suburbs of Durban will have their Kafir Beer Halls to obtain money from the natives who will not resist such a temptation.<sup>88</sup>

This letter, with its use of racial ideology, and presentation of Africans as helpless victims of their appetites, was cleverly constructed for the burgesses of Sydenham. There was apparently no response to this letter and protest marches were held in the area.

Parallel to these developments and not organizationally linked to them, the togt workers were drawing their own conclusions about the beer monopoly. The agitation against the 'Durban system' of beer monopoly and Native Affairs bureaucracy begged the question of the relation of the togt workers to the ICU; obviously large numbers had joined the ICU as individuals, the struggles against the Durban system were to bring out the capacity of the togt workers to act as a collective unit and to engage in alliances with the ICU. At certain points in the struggle quite definite differences of ideology and strategy were clear between Champion and the togt workers. Independently of ICU organization or intervention by Champion until at an advanced stage, a number of incidents built up at the docks which eventually culminated in the boycott of the beerhalls and bitter clashes between the workers and the police. The precise origins of the workers' struggle against the beerhalls are obscure, a series of events gathering force in an atmosphere of increasing hostility to the oppression of the property owners' state: the enforced residence in compounds, beerhalls, Borough Police, taxes, and miserable wages. The attack on the beerhalls was an attempt to strike at the roots of the cheap labour system and the state which enforced the exploitation of the workers.

The resistance developed in fits and starts. The windows of the Point beerhall were smashed and the overseers' office raided on 6 May 1929, but there was no further action until quite late in May. Some of the hostility of the workers to the beerhalls came from those workers who were brewing and selling mahewu;<sup>90</sup> this activity does not seem to have grown to any size, but the subsequent events were precipitated by the compound manager at the

Point ordering the workers to stop brewing mahewu except in small quantities. Any sale of the drink was prohibited. One of the workers, Mcijelwa Mnomezulu, complained that an Indian storekeeper who sold the ingredients was behind the prohibition.<sup>91</sup> The induna, Makati, who had announced the new regulation ( *he* was also a sergeant in the Borough Police) later alleged that Mnomezulu had attempted to stop the togt workers making purchases at the Indian store and also at the Point beerhall. Mnomezulu was brought by Makati before Chester, the Chief Clerk in the municipal Native Affairs Department, on 30 May 1929. After consulting the manager of the department, Layman, Mnomezulu's togt badge was withdrawn.<sup>92</sup> But he was not told of the decision immediately. Chester had heard rumours of the beerhall boycott and wanted a marked man who could be watched to see who was leading the agitation against the beerhalls. Mnomezulu was only warned against continuing to call for a boycott. The department had a more subtle way of getting rid of him: his togt licence would not be renewed. Later the compound manager refused to re-register Mnomezulu 'in accordance with instructions' and he was told to find employment elsewhere.

The boycott of the beerhalls built up over a period of a few days. A number of accidental issues accelerated the workers' hostility; on 5 June the lights failed and there was a general stampede out of the beerhall. Workers were subsequently arrested for creating a disturbance, as beer cans had been thrown about and tables overturned; they were fined by a magistrate on 6 June.<sup>93</sup> The boycott against the Indian trader had become effective at about this time, in an attempt to win back his customers he had asked Champion to intervene. It was through the trader apparently that Champion became aware of the boycott and the demands of the workers. When he visited the Indian storekeeper on 11 June 1929 the togt workers had surrounded his car and called for his support. There is no reason to doubt Champion's later statement that he had not mobilized the workers to protest against the beer monopoly but had been drawn in by the togt workers. 'The

idea of the boycott commenced at the Point', he stated later in evidence to the Commission of Enquiry, 'and it was only located at the Point'. His advice to the workers and statements made at the time confirmed his view that 'the thing had got too far when I came to the Point', and he was unable to fill out an intermediary role between the workers and the authorities.<sup>94</sup>

What Champion added to the growing action of the workers was a greater politicization of the issues, but also an insistence on 'constitutionalism' and opposition to the strike movement. Wavering between open support for the workers' demands and the possibility of a general strike and the alternative of being recognized by the municipality as the moderate leader of the African people, Champion attempted to hold the centre. He became radical in words and moderate in action.

When the workers approached Champion on 11 June they had in mind taking strike action to demand the reinstatement of Mnomezulu, but he opposed this strategy. He was, however, converted to the beerhall boycott and addressed a meeting of workers near the Point on 12 June, calling on the workers to support the boycott but not to strike. His speech made in the evening was in effect a repudiation of limited strike action by the togt workers in the morning.<sup>95</sup> The industrial demands of the workers and solidarity with Mnomezulu were subordinated to the anti-beer monopoly struggle. In the evening of 12 June pickets were formed and systematic discipline exercised over the working class as a whole. The togt workers and the ICU set about constructing a definite campaign of joint action, to agitate against the beer monopoly and to organize pickets. For more than three days the togt workers and the ICU Iase Natal discussed cooperation at a series of committee meetings which established the Anti-Kaffir Beer Manufacturing League committed to a general boycott of beerhalls.<sup>96</sup> The system of day labour possessed some advantages for the dock workers in developing their organization; they could sacrifice some days' labour in having full discussion about strategy. It was possibly at this time that the togt workers joined the ICU Iase Natal en bloc.<sup>97</sup>

As agreement deepened on the necessity for an all out struggle against the beer monopoly the sales at the beerhalls plummeted as pickets stood outside. This was noticeable from 13 June even though a strict boycott was not being enforced.

The Anti-Kaffir Beer Manufacturing League issued a pamphlet which denounced both the beer monopoly and the compounds and barracks which were its complement. It exposed the roots of the oppressive municipality in the parasitical beer monopoly: 'it has enriched the Corporation at Durban and it has built barracks for Natives where they are illtreated'. The League protested against the compounds 'which are full of bad laws and disagreeable control; because a Native who lives in these barracks is like a prisoner on account of the regulations governing them'. All the grievances of the workers were absolutely ignored by those in authority. It concluded with a warning that anyone breaching the boycott would be punished by the promoters of the resolution 'according to their law'. The leaflet combined many of Champion's moral arguments against beer drinking (it encouraged a waste of money, drunkenness) with the analysis of the source of revenue for the municipal apparatus of control. It also included a five point resolution which was adopted by a meeting of workers employed in gangs at the Point and togt workers held at the hall of the ICU.<sup>98</sup>

When a more rigorous boycott of the beerhalls came into operation on Friday, 14 June 1929 the togt workers took advantage of the general resistance to press their demands for the reinstatement of Mnomezulu and other grievances. A deputation consisting of Mnomezulu, Mtehelwa Ndhlovu, Dazu Zikali, and J.H. London, the Assistant Secretary of the ICU of Natal was received by Chester. The workers complained that conditions had worsened steadily after the previous togt inspector had retired. Although Chester said he did not consider the deputation representative of togt workers in the barracks, during the meeting he received reports of mass picketing to enforce the boycott of the beerhalls.<sup>99</sup>

According to the beerhall overseer, trouble had broken out when armed pickets had surrounded the entrance of the Point beerhall. At 1130 an induna, Folweni, had come to the beerhall to call the railway workers out to work, apparently carrying out the agreement of the municipality in 1914 to allow more control to employers over the drinking hours of the workers. Before he could enter the building he was stopped and told to explain his position to the ICU office. It was claimed that he was suddenly attacked by the pickets but given support by the municipal police who came out to relieve him. In the melee which followed the beerhall was stoned, the fence broken down, and the compounds stormed with the windows in each building being smashed. Clashes between the pickets and the municipal police continued.<sup>100</sup> Thousands of the Anti-Kaffir Beer League pamphlets were distributed on the following day.

The League moved decisively on to the offensive at a mass meeting on Sunday, 16 June 1929, which was attended by 5,000 Africans and addressed by Champion and J.T. Gumede, the former president of the African National Congress who had not been re-elected because of his left wing views. Champion's speech at this meeting, which was recorded by members of the CID, may be judged as a fair reflection of what was said; it was not contested at the Commission of Enquiry. In it he acknowledged the leading part taken by the togt workers in boycotting the beerhalls, developed the nature of the alliance between the ICU and these workers, promised the support of his militia for the boycott, and expressed his personal support. But he also completely avoided mentioning the demands of the workers for the reinstatement of Mnomezulu and was complacent about the workers' earnings. The togt workers were the leaders of the boycott: 'The Natives who have decided that there should be no beer made in Durban are the Natives at the Point'. He felt they were under very bad supervision but argued (in complete contrast to the decisions of the ICU to demand 8s a day and the wage demands of the workers) that the workers were earning 'a very good salary'. The problem

was fundamentally that of the beerhalls, many of the workers 'are so broke that they do not want to see their relatives ', having wasted their money on beer. His speech acknowledged a certain distance between the togt workers and the ICU; the workers had been told Champion would rob them of their wages, but now they had changed. 'They stood together one day and treated the Corporation the same as the Corporation told them to treat Champion.' The ICU now committed itself to the complete support of the togt workers; 'from today the ICU is taking up the burden of the togt labourers and are in sympathy with them and are willing to die with them'. He promised the support of his militia ('my boys') who acted as marshals during ICU demonstrations and were under the command of a Swazi, Mjaji Dhlamini. They, together with the League volunteers, would discipline any African going into the beerhalls.<sup>101</sup>

His speech reflected his egotistical temperament; he was to take personal command of the boycott and he had been personally misused by the Corporation. But Champion had also provided an organizational ability the workers lacked, and it was through the ICU that the boycott spread from the Point throughout Durban, and even further into the countryside. On Monday, 17 June 1929, a general boycott of the beerhalls came into operation and a larger deputation than previously (now of twelve workers) met Chester and presented him with a list of their demands and grievances. The fundamental demand was for the reinstatement of Mnomezulu, for an end to togt registration and the regimentation of the barracks. The key demand was that 'the Native who was deprived of his registration record as a togt labourer should be reinstated because we consider that he is not personally responsible for the boycott of Kafir Beer which is the resolution of all Natives employed at the Point'. A long list of demands and grievances followed, some crucial (such as the demand that the togt badges should be eliminated), some incidental (that the barracks were not clean). All in all, the list gives considerable insight into the way in which the togt regulations were being applied, with

inmates forced to do the upkeep of the barracks, and the totality of control over the workers. The workers put forward these demands and grievances: the yards and paths in the compound at Bell Street were in poor repair, the workers should not have to carry refuse from their rooms to rubbish bins, the workers should not have to clean the windows as this should be the responsibility of employees of the Corporation, the bathroom floors were never scrubbed and were slippery and a source of danger, that wives were not allowed to stay as long as the workers would wish — up to two weeks, the stores in the eating house should be kept open until 2100, the tables in the eating houses should be kept open on Sundays, the period in which rents may be paid should be extended — seven days being inadequate in the case of a man out of work who should be allowed fourteen days, the police interfered when togt workers were waiting to be engaged near the Point clock, the togt badges should be eliminated, there was inadequate lighting in the lavatories, bathrooms and pathways, the compound officials refused to admit visitors, and wood for cooking was not provided.<sup>102</sup>

These demands and grievances indicate a considerably greater resentment against the whole 'Native Affairs' and employer system of regulation and exploitation, although on balance the emphasis was primarily against police and municipal control. Significantly, these were not the issues raised by Champion or acknowledged by subsequent enquiries.<sup>103</sup> But although the workers added demands which would have abolished the togt system of control and barrack regimentation to the burning question of the time, they continued to attack the commercial interests which they felt had precipitated the conflict. From the workers' argument it was the Indian trader opposite the gate of the barracks operating through the induna Makati who had increased the burden of restrictions on the workers. In resisting the trader, the workers implicitly supported the four petty traders inside the barracks. 'The Indian trader in furthering his business, succeeded in getting the management to close the Native trader's shop at 1700 sharp while the Indian sold his goods up to the

hour the togt labourers went to bed. The Indian, not satisfied with this, he actually went inside the compound with the Native induna to throw out the mahewu belonging to the Natives, complaining that the Natives were no more buying sugar from his store and only used mahewu instead of his drinks.' The workers protested that two workers had been arrested for opposing this action, and one had lost his badge. 'The man was then deprived of his badge, the fact which he reported to his fellow labourers who decided to continue the boycott of the Indian trader, strike work, and also include Kaffir Beer which was supervised by the Native induna, who gave the instructions.'<sup>104</sup> According to Luhlongwana, a togt worker, there had been four barrels of mahewu and when Makati made an inspection of the barracks on 27 May he had instructed the men to make mahewu only in paraffin tins. This had prompted Mnomezulu to decide that since the men were not allowed to make mahewu they should stop drinking beer.<sup>105</sup>

The hostility of the African workers to the Indian trader was not a simple issue of racial animosity with workers of one race supporting their 'own' traders. They were demanding free availability to the workers of all stores (as made clear in the list of demands), and resisting the imposition of controls over their lives exercised directly by capital (in this instance in the form of the Indian trader). The fact that the boycott started initially both against the trader and the beerhalls showed the workers were aiming to destroy all the bases of control over their lives and labour.<sup>106</sup>

Chester contested many of the arguments of the workers. He objected to petty trading in the compound; 'they are supposed to be out working', and thereby confirmed that the national oppression of African people was to secure 'cheapened' working class. The workers should not be allowed to sell mahewu; sanitation demanded food should not be kept in the compounds. The Indian trader, he said, had a tea room licence and so could stay open later than the African traders. Makati had denied overturning the drums of mahewu and

had not stopped the workers from brewing in limited quantities. Visitors to the compound were restricted because there had been claims of thefts, anyway 'it is not desirable that we should have unknown visitors coming into the barracks indiscriminately', demonstrating that the issue of control was the real priority. The rooms at the barracks had been cleaned by the workers themselves for 15½ years, why should it now become a matter of dispute?

While these and other issues were being discussed with Chester, armed pickets were enforcing the beer boycott agreed to on Sunday. Inevitably, the municipal police intervened to protect their source of income and violent clashes between police and pickets took place again. As the clashes spread Champion was invited to participate in negotiations with Town Council members. At last he secured the recognition from the bourgeoisie he had sought, his mediating powers were being acknowledged, and he agreed to call off the boycott without consulting the togt leaders. Baston, the District Commandant of the SAP, called on Champion with the Chief Constable, paying him the supreme compliment. The three headed to the Point where the police had heard a group of pickets were moving into town. Ndhlovu, an ICU leader at the Point and an induna of railway workers, later joined Champion and the police.<sup>107</sup> Together they visited the Bell Street barracks and found no gathering, although the workers started to congregate around them. Champion instructed the workers to stop picketing. He said he intended to go into town to bring the workers' grievances before the Town Council in 'a proper constitutional manner'. The man who had declared himself prepared to die for the boycott on Sunday, when acknowledged as 'African leader' called off the struggle on Monday. The workers obeyed Champion's instructions and messengers were sent out to other beerhalls to call off the pickets. As Baston said afterwards with evident approval: 'Champion's conduct throughout was perfectly correct'.<sup>108</sup> Within the space of less than twenty-four hours Champion's position had become authoritative, a place was secured in the

hierarchy of social and political control through the popular resistance to the beer monopoly. This place was, however, tenuous and dependent on his ability to open the floodgates of resistance and then command them to be closed according to the tactics of the moment.

Neither the police nor Champion had apparently calculated on the possibility of a white vigilante mob being incited by sensational press accounts of the clashes between the pickets and the police. Despite the police issuing a bulletin announcing the trouble was over, a white mob gathered at the ICU hall in the 'bazaar' area of Durban. The hall was besieged by the mob and Africans attacked in the streets. Despite the efforts of both the Mayor and the Chief Magistrate the blood of the vigilantes was up and they refused to disperse. Violent clashes took place between the vigilantes and the besieged Africans and a number of people on both sides were killed or seriously injured. Hearing of the attacks on the ICU hall, the dock workers of the Point formed a relieving column and counter-attacked the besiegers. The reaction of the police was entirely different to their parleying with the vigilantes. Although the municipal police were barred by law from carrying firearms, they and the white vigilantes fired at the column, and when it retreated, pursued the workers in cars as they fled back to the Point. The forces of order and reaction secured a victory by force of arms; altogether six Africans and two whites were killed, and 108 persons injured.<sup>109</sup>

This bloody violence, the mass resistance to the beer monopoly, and the unchecked formation of mobs and militias, was of concern to the ruling class. In South Africa, unlike the experience of the Southern States of America, the state has always abrogated to itself the full use of violence against the working class and the black majority.<sup>110</sup> By granting the state full powers to maintain the public order of the capitalist system (staatsrecht), mobs and vigilante groups, even when attacking the oppressed majority, have been deprecated.<sup>111</sup> A thorough investigation into the background and

circumstances of the riot was ordered to be made by Justice de Waal, the state-appointed commissioner. Ironically, the supposedly liberal-minded English section of the ruling class was to be judged by an Afrikaner trained in the school of Roman-Dutch law. While de Waal argued that the Africans were 'by no means solely to blame or even primarily to blame' and concluded his investigation with a plea for clemency, he provided a complete vindication of the beer monopoly and considered the demands of the togt workers were 'almost pathetic' and 'utterly devoid of any substance'.<sup>112</sup> He placed the blame for the deaths and injuries squarely on the shoulders of the white mob which had precipitated violence in a tense situation. In opposition to the 'lawlessness' of either black or white he proposed that the police should be provided with firearms 'not for use so much as for open display'. This conclusion had the effect of further strengthening the state against the workers, but as a supposed 'impartial' armed body.

The report of the commissioner was full of praise for the Durban system the African workers had given their lives to resist; an end of the beer monopoly would mean an immediate increase in drunkenness and crime. De Waal considered that 'one undoubted benefit' of the beer monopoly was that 'the net revenue accruing from the sale of kafir beer is spent in various ways upon the Native himself and for his benefit'. It would be impossible to allow the African people to brew their own beer as this would allow the cheap spirits brewers of shimiyane, skokiaan, and kekeviki<sup>113</sup> to flourish. But de Waal also discovered that the municipality which had pioneered rigorous control over the African working class and had developed a unique source of revenue from the workers themselves, had done the least of major industrial towns in providing housing or recreational facilities for the African working class. The beer money was flowing, as ever, into the salaries of the police and bureaucrats and as a subsidy to other municipal departments. The hypocrisy of the benevolent paternalism of the Durban system was revealed in a 'free' police force (that is, one not charged to the property owners of Durban) without

any of the benefits promised to the African workers. At this point the commissioner was critical. Although 'high class barracks and eating houses' had been built, 'it cannot be too strongly urged upon the Borough that the establishment of a native location is a pressing need'. In a mixture of encouragement to the 'better class natives' and arcadian utopianism, de Waal proposed 'a residential native township where a native who wishes to do so may reside with his family; where he could keep a cow, run his fowls and till a small piece of land.' He strongly endorsed a policy of ameliorating the social conditions of the African workers as a means of regaining social and political control; recreational and sporting facilities would relieve the worker of an 'excess of vitality' and remove him to the playing fields away from being exploited by 'agitators at home in his barracks'. He perceived the concentration of workers by capital in compounds as ambiguous; capable of bringing them under strict discipline but also allowing their speedy mobilization against the state.

He considered that the barracks were well constructed, clean, well kept, and well ventilated. Each room in the barracks had sixteen bunks and the workers provided their own bedding. The bunks were portable and taken weekly outside where they were thoroughly disinfected and de-verminized in a hot solution of caustic soda. The workers paid two pence per day and night or five shillings per month for accommodation. They were allowed either to buy ready cooked food in the eating houses where African caterers served the workers, or to cook their own food at the large open fireplaces in the kitchen.

The food supplied by the eating house licensees is wholesome, clean and good. I was present when food was being served, the native being accommodated with a seat at a trestle table. For a large plate of food, consisting of meat, rice and beans or potatoes — clean looking, wholesome and good-smelling — he pays threepence. For a thick slice of excellent bread he pays a penny, and for a large cup of coffee with milk another penny. If he indulges in three big meals a day, and assuming

that he took bread and coffee at each meal, he would pay one and threepence for his meals and twopence for his accommodation, that is one and fivepence a day. As wages are uniformly good (the dock labourers' earnings run from 4s 6d upwards) the native would have a substantial balance in hand at the end of the month.<sup>114</sup>

The beer was served out in tin mugs in either a third or a sixth of a gallon for 6d or 3d respectively, which would make it as expensive as a large plate of food.

With this strictly statistical and uncritical evaluation of the barracks and the beer monopoly, de Waal dissolved the comprehensive grievances and demands of the workers and their oppression under the well-oiled machinery of the Durban system. Instead of a systematic consideration of the list of grievances and demands item by item, a complete endorsement of the foundations of the barracks, police, and bureaucracy, is provided and the aspirations of the workers ridiculed. Despite concluding that the municipality had, by withdrawing the togt badge of Mnomezulu, set in train a series of events which had led to the general picketing of the beerhalls on Friday, 14 June 1929, de Waal proposed no changes in the arbitrary powers of the 'Native Affairs' bureaucracy. The only gesture of a concession to the workers in the entire report was in proposing that Mnomezulu should have his togt badge restored to him as 'an act of grace'.<sup>115</sup> He had not deserved to keep his badge by his behaviour, but he needed it to live and work. With this exception, the demands and grievances of the workers were regarded as frivolous and imaginary.

In the absence of an analysis of the exploitation and oppression of the African workers as a basis for the decisive resistance to the beer monopoly, de Waal magnified the issue of Champion's personality as an alternative explanation. Taking up Champion's complaint that the municipal authorities had refused to recognize his right to approach them on behalf of African people with grievances, de Waal observed, 'taking himself seriously, and being very

touchy and of a suspicious nature, the alleged denial to him of the right of approach rankled, and has, to my mind, been one of the chief causes that contributed to trouble in recent years between the Borough of Durban and the natives led and guided by Champion.' Subordinating the demands of the African working class and the political questions of the resistance to the analysis of personality, de Waal paved the way for advocating an advisory board as a means of securing more effective social and political control. This solution to the challenge posed by the demands of the workers was fully acceptable to Champion who agreed that an advisory board would make the ICU quite irrelevant. He gave an emphatic promise to drop the ICU if an advisory board was introduced: 'I would be satisfied . . . my work would be done'.<sup>116</sup> Evidently attracted by this prospect the advisory board was proposed by de Waal because Champion 'has failed as a go-between'; the board would provide alternative access for grievance-holders to the bureaucracy independently of the ICU.

The commissioner's report containing a mixture of insistence on super-structural reforms and proposals to arm the state against demonstrators in the streets did not command universal respect from the enthusiasts of imperialism in Natal. In particular, white officials and politicians were firmly opposed to acts of clemency which they regarded as a sign of weakness. Marwick, the former head of the Native Affairs Department and now member of parliament for Illovo, objected to any exercise of clemency, and thought that the commissioner had underestimated the effects of communist agitation; Oswald Pirow, the Minister of Justice, insisted that the law would take its course.<sup>117</sup> The report was more attractive to other sections of the bourgeoisie. 'He has frankly faced the facts; he has not slurred over those which were not pleasant to European opinion; he has seen that not less than justice has been done to the Native; he has not magnified, as he might so easily have done, the effect of Communist propaganda on the Native mind; and above all, he has not sought to make a scapegoat.'<sup>118</sup> These were the opinions of the

editor of the Natal Mercury who considered that the report had vindicated the Native Affairs Department and proved that agitation against the beer monopoly was 'altogether bogus'. This section of the ruling class was more concerned about the volatility of some white workers and the lumpenproletariat, and argued that white racism expressed in the cry of 'black peril' could be counter-productive to social control over black workers.

These differences of emphasis within the ruling class aside, the problem of re-establishing rigorous control over the African workers remained. Far from Champion's orders having been accepted by the workers, the boycott of the beerhalls continued unabated, although pickets were no longer mentioned. Quite apart from challenging a central aspect of the Native Urban Areas Act for which the Durban system served as a model, the bureaucracy was losing considerable revenue. The Native Affairs Department's authority was being flouted by African workers who, far from considering themselves defeated by the killings, were in an increasingly defiant mood. Although the ICU and togt workers had joined forces in the Anti-Kaffir Beer League to enforce a general boycott of the beerhalls, the boycott had been initiated by the workers, and with the diversion of Champion into the manoeuvrings of the municipality following the report, the boycott continued under the direct leadership of the workers. It even seems to have gained new social support in a proliferation of illegal brewing of beer and shimiyane as an alternative to the beerhalls and income for African women.

As the municipal police were increasingly deployed in destroying petty brewing and driving the workers back to the beerhalls, the workers' resistance intensified. Many of the African workers were eager to turn the Point area into a 'no go' area for the police and to attack police patrols. A few incidents in September 1929 provide some insight into the atmosphere. When the police raided a deep sea fishing boat on which shimiyane was brewed and sold wholesale to compounds at Maydon Wharf, a group of armed Africans

attacked the raiding party. After a sharp fight, twenty-three of the African combatants were arrested.<sup>119</sup> On another occasion African workers refused to pay fares on a ferry and challenged the police to fight. In the battle which followed stones were thrown at the police and a large crowd of hostile workers came out of the compounds at Bamboo Square to confront the police.<sup>120</sup> With the police increasingly unable to bring the workers' resistance under control, the bourgeoisie became restive. The same editor who approved de Waal's report for its balance in August was panicky by November.

African workers concentrated in barracks at the Point and, commanding a dominant position in the strategic dock work, were coming to pose a challenge not only to the system of local government but also to the national government. The Natal Mercury, previously concerned with inflammatory white racism, gave its fullest support to measures proposed by Pirow to deal with 'agitators who are inflaming the Native mine by dangerous subversive doctrines', meaning the Communist Party. The editor was alarmed at the growing number of incidents against the authorities led by African workers in the past three to four months. He was most concerned not with the violence of the resistance, but with its cohesion. 'The manner in which the ICU boycott of the Municipal Kafir canteens and eating houses has been enforced by the rigid obedience of many thousands of Natives to the orders of a group of profoundly mistaken leaders clearly indicates the existence of a state of most unusual discipline among the workers who follow the banner of the ICU.' While possibly over-estimating the direction of the ICU leadership over the continuation of the boycott, the statement does acknowledge the self-discipline of the workers who led the struggle. The organized resistance to the Durban system, though 'passive at the moment', had been strengthened when <sup>despite</sup> a magisterial prohibition a meeting was allowed to continue its proceedings without police intervention. The state's authority was made the butt for the wit and ridicule of every African worker by what the newspaper considered an 'unhappy faux pas'. Finally the editor came down heavily on the side of the party of

repression, castigating those who might object. 'The time has come when the authority of the Law must be restored, and any citizen who today delays that restoration will stamp himself as an enemy of society.'<sup>121</sup> Without advocating a 'conspiracy theory' of the state, it would be surprising if the editor was not aware of the preparations being made for a decisive attack on the African workers at the Point by the police.

### Uncontrolled resistance and the national police raid

Far from having reduced the workers' movement to impotence by unleashing violence against the pickets and relieving column, or by proposing mild reforms, Durban became a focus for some of the most unrelenting antagonism to the state and to the particular forms of national oppression administered locally. As this development is somewhat tangential to the disorganization and decay of working class struggle in other major industrial centres towards the end of the 1920s and during the depression, this calls for some comment even if a final explanation of why Durban should be the focus may not be possible.<sup>122</sup> What is certain is that the divisions within the African working class which were evident elsewhere: the division between migrants and the urban working class and between advanced and retarded sections of the working class, were not reproduced in Durban. Possibly a decisive factor was the exemplary development of the machinery of control over the African working class fuelled by the transparent revenue-generating engine of the beer monopoly. As a centre in which the national oppression and exploitation of the African working class was most advanced, a corresponding intensity of resistance could be expected. This fierce resistance more than elsewhere carried the stamp of the African working class as there was a leftward shift both politically and industrially. As anticipated in Marxist theory, the forward movement of the workers brought out sharp differences with the petty bourgeoisie sections of society which decidedly opposed the actions of the workers and their organizations. In a phenomenon which was not found elsewhere, the African workers moved decisively to the left leaving the leaders

of the national movement high and dry, a situation which created an unusually propitious moment for the Communist Party to establish a firm base in the area. Reflecting the 'ultra-left' turn within the Comintern, the Communist Party reaped the benefits of a process which was already in motion before real organizational work was started in Durban.

The contrast between the African petty bourgeoisie and organized workers was marked, the divisions being widened by the Communist Party's slogan of a Black Republic. Dube, the President of the Natal Native Congress, was so concerned about the activity of workers and the ICU that he even demanded measures against both. Although the differences between Champion and Dube can be ascribed to the personal pursuit of power, these differences brought out the opposing class forces supporting each faction.<sup>123</sup> When Dube, for instance, organized a meeting of 'respectable Natives' and chiefs in the urban location after denouncing 'rotten social conditions' caused not by the municipality but by 'Town Natives' who organized all night dances, the ICU militia of young men and women broke up the meeting, rushed the platform and defied the police.<sup>124</sup> Responding to this attack, Dube made statements which put the racist ruling class to shame.

Town Natives are out of control, and the criminal element is increasing in large numbers. Law-abiding Natives cannot tolerate this state of things. It seems that the lives of those people who work to stop undesirable conditions among Town Natives are not safe. It is up to those in authority to break up these amalayita mobs. The leaders of these gangs must be found out and dealt with. The heterogeneous mixture of de-tribalized Natives in our large Towns is a problem within a problem.

In his fury he was providing the Native Affairs bureaucracy and the police with the justification to attack an organization of African workers which had made tremendous advances in lifting the weight of national oppression from the shoulders of all Africans in the towns. Similar statements made in 1916

had led to the municipality imposing an even more rigorous set of by-laws to control every aspect of the African workers' lives in the towns.<sup>125</sup>

Shortly after this incident he warned the ICU that the agitation against the beerhalls was 'a matter which is entirely outside the scope of the ICU whom we understand are (sic) a purely trade unionist organization'. If the ICU continued in its 'militaristic and defiant attitude' there would be 'days of great trouble and suffering ahead'.<sup>126</sup> And when these days inevitably came, he wrote: 'We entirely dissociate ourselves from the recent violent measures taken by certain members of our race in Durban'. After repudiating the picketing and self-defence of the African workers, Dube made a mild protest against urban controls and made similar proposals to the de Waal report.

... we cannot help feeling that if more provision were made in the towns for our entertainment and recreation, by the provision of, say, Swimming Baths, Lecture Halls, Picture Palaces, Schools, and so forth — by the provision of social centres — in short, by provision for the gradual elevation of our people to a higher status, contentment would be secured.<sup>127</sup>

With this Booker T. Washington outlook of social reform, Dube stood a considerable distance away from the African workers who had found in the ICU, with all its faults, an organization to struggle against oppression and even an entertainment place in the ICU hall.

During the time in which the Natal Native Congress was edging away from the mass organization of the workers and its leadership repudiating the ICU, the most important section of the African working class at the time, the togt workers, were slowly growing in number. Although 'casual' labour evokes a mental image of continuous ebb and flux, the togt workers as a self-conscious group were surprisingly stable, with a fairly low proportion of new workers registered each year. In 1925 which was a year of fairly high registrations at the Point only 517 new togt licences were issued, some 2 per cent of the total. The remainder were togt workers who either were re-registering, after having been back to the reserves, or renewing their licence on a monthly

basis. The togt workers, who referred to themselves as inyati (in Zulu, buffalo, i.e. strong men) had a relatively advanced consciousness not only through their concentration in the dock area compounds but also because they saw themselves as 'instrumental' (the chief instruments of production) in the labour process in the docks; their labour was central to all work operations in landing and shipping cargo.<sup>128</sup> Togat labour developed in response to the development of capital. With the opening up of the Congella dock area the number of togt workers increased proportionally in 1928 and an increase in new registrations to almost 5 per cent.<sup>129</sup> Despite these shifts, the impression is created of a relatively stable and experienced group of workers at the Point, who were to constitute the main force in the resistance to employers and the state. They would provide the most effective challenge to the urban areas legislation in any industrial centre.

Although the central focus of resistance to the Durban system was on the beer monopoly, the repression when it came attacked an equally important issue of non-cooperation and resistance: the poll tax. Pirow, the Minister of Justice, took the tax payment as the main thrust of repression against the fluid area of the beer boycott. The imposition of the increased poll tax had led to direct resistance by the togt workers to police action taken to enforce the new law in 1927. The municipality undertook a campaign to increase payment of the tax by African workers with little success. At a meeting held on 2 December 1928, the municipal officials had addressed African workers on the necessity of paying the additional £1 a year imposed in 1925. The workers were told they would be arrested after three months if they had not paid; an admission that evasion of the new tax was widespread. The workers were incensed by this threat, stood up in their thousands and shouted down the officials. One of them was reduced to appealing to Champion to restore order, which he did.<sup>130</sup> The impotence of the bureaucracy was demonstrated by the fact that Durban, the largest centre of employment in Natal, was the lowest revenue producing area of the general

tax. The statistics provide evidence of massive evasion. While the remote rural district of Msinga had brought in £15,950 in general tax in 1928, Durban had only paid in £459. Even the adjacent urban area of Pinetown had managed to bring in £13,645.<sup>131</sup> Even with an enormous increase in the number of arrests and convictions between 1926 and 1929 in Natal, with convictions increasing from 4,338 to 15,961 in the respective years, the revenue generated in Durban did not rise proportionately.<sup>132</sup> The tax law was being openly flouted by the African workers in Durban and it was on this issue that the state counter-attacked against the general contempt for the law and the police. While it might not be possible to force the workers into the beerhalls, the same result could be obtained by tackling the parallel question of revenue for the national state.

Durban was proclaimed the 'storm centre' of South Africa, by the Natal Mercury on the morning of 14 November 1929. The newspaper, which had established a special liaison with the police, justified the national police raid on the Point which took place that morning by arguing that 'law and order' had been challenged to an unprecedented extent since the riots of June. Strong police patrols had been attacked by large numbers of workers at the Point, prisoners had been released, and 'impudent' messages had been sent to the police. The police had been particularly alarmed by Communist Party plans for Dingaan's Day (16 December). A call had been made for demonstrations and strikes under the slogan of 'Long Live the Native Republic'.<sup>133</sup> Only a small number of African workers had paid their poll tax, and many groups of African workers were defiant of the police and counter-attacked when the police attempted to arrest them. Not even the Mobile Squadron, which terrorized the rural areas could have a 'restraining effect'; it had been recently attacked by several thousand Africans at the Point. A 'conspiracy of a revolutionary nature' existed which would climax on Dingaan's Day with the aim of undermining the South African Police to prepare for an eventual Black Republic.

Hundreds of specially equipped police made a carefully planned attack on the Point on the morning of 14 November in a great display of force. The Minister of Justice, Oswald Pirow, flew into Durban from Pretoria to take personal command of the 700 police armed with machine-guns, rifles with fixed bayonets and tear gas. The police drew a cordon around the barracks in the early hours of the morning and sent in strong detachments in search of assegais, battle axes and other weapons, and to demand tax receipts. The detectives entered the barracks at 0430, which was the usual time of getting up in the quarters, and sent the workers out to line up in single file to present their passes and poll tax receipts for examination. The raid did not have the element of surprise that had been counted upon, strong rumours of a nationally coordinated police raid had been reported in the Johannesburg press. Some of the workers were defiant, but most accepted the police raid philosophically, or were even amused with the colossal efforts of the authorities to stamp out their resistance. Even as workers under the direct control of employers and the municipality and without arms, they had earned a national reputation for their fighting abilities. Many of the workers had been forewarned and had slipped away to the Bluff (just over the mouth of the bay) and had taken refuge in the bush. Despite these counter measures the massive presence of the police had, in the words of the Natal Mercury, 'a profound moral effect on the Native mind'. On the first day of the raid more than 6,000 Africans were 'dealt with' and 500 alleged tax defaulters were charged in six special courts. The attack on the barracks was completed by 0630 and by 0700 the police had disappeared from the Point area. The police worked methodically through the barracks and the papers of the workers were examined by a special staff; those whose papers were in order were sent immediately to work. By 0600 over 350 African tax defaulters had been mustered and marched to jail. The objective was to strike terror into the hearts of the workers at the Point, to restore the prestige of the police, and to convince Africans 'that they could not resist the authorities with impunity'.

In a display of the new techniques of repression the police, who were equipped with tear gas bombs and respirators, tossed tear gas bombs into the crowds of Africans who gathered to witness the drama of repression. A tear gas canister was thrown into a crowd in Bell Street, where there was a large compound, from a passing police car with 'devastating results', causing amusement from the police and the bourgeois press reporting the raid from the vantage point of the police. The local press was pleased that the sober lessons of police discipline had been impressed on the workers as previously there had been the 'greatest difficulty in maintaining discipline among togt workers'. The police raid on the Point barracks was, however, only the beginning of a big campaign to enforce the poll tax payments and to control the illicit brewing of liquor throughout Durban and the surrounding area. Similar raids later took place on the barracks at the Bluff and Congella. 134

As the police spread throughout the city the earlier light-hearted response to the raid turned to terror. Faced with the prospect of a month's imprisonment with hard labour, African workers flooded the tax offices. Altogether £800 was collected at the tax office in one day, with £200 raised from prosecutions in the special courts. These courts operated in the old Indian Repatriation Camp at the Point and from 0700 six magistrates and ten tax collectors worked through the cases of the defaulters. A newspaper reporter wrote that the atmosphere was 'more like barracks rather than courts of justice'. The workers were given the option of either paying the tax or receiving 30 days hard labour; if they paid the tax immediately the case was withdrawn. In bringing the judiciary and the civil service into one administrative unit, 'the work of the magistrates was lightened considerably'. Whether from poverty or defiance of the law, more than 200 workers were sentenced to imprisonment. 135

With the popular resistance to the police and Native Affairs Department under control, the local press carried an editorial claiming that an answer had been found to anti-government agitation. With some self-satisfaction it was reported that the authority of the police had been restored in an area where there had been a steady erosion of that authority. The Department of Justice had achieved its primary purpose. 'Its combing out of several nests of lawlessness in the Native barracks of the Borough had had an immediate moral effect, plainly visible in the changed demeanour of thousands of labourers and house "boys" yesterday'. Without the police having to use violence, it was claimed, those who had defied the police had been taught a lesson. It was revealed that one of the most compelling reasons for the overwhelming use of force was the slogan of the Black Republic and the plan for mass demonstrations on Dingaan's Day. Attempting to maintain the unity of all sections of the ruling class in the face of liberal criticism of the national raid it was argued that whites were united in opposing the Black Republic. 'In this matter the White civilisation stands solid. There is no distinct Natal, Transvaal, Free State or Cape point of view in regard to the security of the fabric of the State as a whole. There is merely one South African standpoint.' Military logistics were introduced: the police exercise had demonstrated the effectiveness of national mobilization and that no part of the Union was isolated for more than twenty-four hours. The greatest triumph reported was that Champion had been one of the many to pay his tax.<sup>136</sup>

Some time later, further evidence was produced to justify the massive repression taken by the South African Police. It was said that a strike of dock workers had been threatened, and this had required decisive measures. 'Had this materialised, there can be little doubt that a disastrous blow would have been struck at shipping activities in Port Natal, which would have had repercussions in the commercial, industrial, and pastoral interests throughout the country. In order, however, to meet such an eventuality, at least in

part, the Government drew up a scheme for the drafting of Native convicts to Durban in order that the work of the Point might be more or less maintained.<sup>137</sup> It was also alleged that plans had been made for the firing of the petrol tanks at the Bluff. According to the bourgeois press, this information had come from indunas and police informers from among the workers. These involved arguments used to justify the national police raid tended to imply that the workers were attempting to organise an insurrection; these fanciful interpretations hiding the mundane and unreported fact that the workers were maintaining the beer boycott without interruption. Whether a strike was planned to supplement this tactic of resistance it is difficult to establish; certainly the Communist Party had called for strikes and demonstrations but this could hardly justify the national mobilization to suppress all resistance at the Point.

The ostentatious and highly publicized raid aroused the opposition both of liberal opinion and the labour movement. The Johannesburg press described the raid as 'barbarous', while the trade unions and Communist Party protested and tried to draw out the strategic implications for working class struggles. The National Executive of the Trade Union Congress and the executive committee of the laundry union protested against the raid and the proposed amendments to the Riotous Assemblies Act. Bill Andrews, spokesman for the TUC, argued that the tax could have been collected by normal means and that African workers were heavily taxed without representation. The Communist Party described the raid as 'bloody baboonery' and instructed the workers as follows: 'Keep cool; keep your heads; do not be rushed or bluffed into false moves even by your own leaders'.<sup>138</sup> Ballinger, who had been closely associated with the final developments within the ICU as a national organization, complained that the de Waal Commission which had stressed clemency had been completely ignored.<sup>139</sup>

Even after the massive display of force by the police, the cordons and searches, and large numbers of workers imprisoned, an unusually precarious situation for the ruling class existed in Durban. Despite the optimism of the local bourgeois press, which felt a decisive change of mood was evident among African workers, nothing essentially had changed. Although more tax may have been squeezed from the workers and they were subjected to the humiliation of searches, arrests and summary trials, the beer boycott continued and the ICU remained extraordinarily popular. Margery Perham, who visited Durban at this time, reported that thousands of African people were attending the ICU hall in search of entertainment and a focus for resistance. The relationship between Champion and the municipal officials was prickly and unstable, and the workers' resistance undiminished.<sup>140</sup> A crisis in political control remained, with the African workers undefeated. In the search for a more stable solution, yet another investigation was ordered, this time by the Native Affairs Commission, a body selected by the government to give advice on methods of rule over African people. This Commission visited Durban on 26 November 1929 accompanied by the Secretary for Native Affairs.

The Commission had discussions with the Borough Council, representatives of areas adjoining the Borough area, the Chamber of Commerce, African organizations, and a representative of the European and African Joint Council. Its report raised a series of new issues, such as the low wages of the African workers, the humiliating treatment of African people by the African police, a lack of sympathy towards Africans by municipal officials, and delays at the tax office, and well as the perennial questions of the lack of urban housing and the beer monopoly. On none of these questions, new or old, did the Commission have anything remarkably original to say – general improvements needed to be made much on the lines of the de Waal Commission. Urban housing should be provided, for instance, as an alternative to the recreation and agitation provided by the ICU and other political organizations. The

existing forms of recreation from Saturday afternoon to Sunday evening were roundly condemned:

This may, and does, take undesirable forms — illicit drinking, listening to the ill-informed and unbalanced agitator of communistic or anti-European tendencies, the attendance at dance-halls where the votaries of the national Zulu dances rub shoulders with others indulging in European dances in some cases with loose women, etc. The atmosphere at these forms of amusement is unhealthy in the extreme and can but lead to deterioration.<sup>141</sup>

Such intense hostility to the organizations of the workers could only provide justification for further repression; the Commission could not even provide the municipality with a definite direction in urban housing.

On the really urgent question of the time, the Commission, not unexpectedly, felt that the existing system of beer monopoly should not be altered. The conflicting opinions of various witnesses were detailed: some were in favour of the abolition of the beerhalls, others said the boycott was only maintained by 'the terrorising and threatening attitude' of a section of the ICU loyal to Champion. African women were somewhat divided between those arguing for total prohibition because the men wasted their earnings on beer, and those asking for 'domestic brewing', or that the Council should be a wholesale brewer with African retailers. The most important fact established was that the boycott of the beerhalls had not been broken by the massive police raid at the Point. The remark made by Champion during the de Waal Commission of Enquiry was substantiated: 'I knew that every black man in Durban was going to abide by the resolution wherever he was, in sympathy with the Point people.'<sup>142</sup> It was most probably the continued success of the beer boycott which brought the Commission to make one positive recommendation: that the Governor-General consider the possibility of deporting Champion from Durban by using his powers as Supreme Chief. Champion had established a tremendous influence with the younger men 'filled with Zulu

energy, lacking an outlet for their spirit, and irresponsible while away from the steady influences of their wives, and children and elder relatives'. This influence, the Commission considered, was full of dangerous consequences.<sup>143</sup>

While these views were hardly exceptional and were an acknowledgement that for the ruling class the failure of repression could only be met with more repression, there were some shifts in an understanding of the level of proletarianization of the African workers. The Commission reported that the municipality had failed to notice the changes which had been brought about affecting Africans during and after the First World War. 'His taxes have increased, his needs have been extended by education and his necessities cost more.' Only a few months after de Waal had concluded that the chief desire of the African worker was to be left alone to earn as much as he could in the shortest possible time 'and then to go back to his kraal', the Native Affairs Commission reported a completely different situation.

Economic pressure forces the Native to go out more into industrial centres and to work for longer periods — the activities in the industrial and commercial world of Durban demanded more and more labour every year — and insensibly and unrecognised the Native has changed from the person who, in the past, came from his reserve for a short period every year to earn the cash to pay his taxes and buy the barest necessities. So instead of having a population which normally worked in the past for only a portion of the year and returned to their kraals there is now both a permanent and a quasi-permanent population within, or within easy reach of the Borough's industrial works.<sup>144</sup>

From recognizing this significant change in the level and form of proletarianization in Durban, the Commission traced many of the grievances and dissatisfaction of the African workers to this new set of circumstances. Following on the de Waal Commission it had to provide some explanation of the extraordinary resilience of the African workers to the most crushing pressure of state power. Following logically on the unpalatable recognition of a militant permanent African working class, the Commission examined the wage issue.

The main grievance of the Africans interviewed by the Commission was the low level of wages.<sup>145</sup> The importance given by the Commission to wages is significant as it was not the primary demand of the ICU; possibly the Commission saw it as an area in which concessions could be made which would undermine the base in the African working class commanded by Champion. This was an issue on which the ICU was weakest and during the anti-beer monopoly agitation wage demands had actually been pushed into the background; Champion explicitly said the wages of togt workers were good but it was the beerhalls which drained the wages away.<sup>146</sup> From a view of the growing urbanization of African workers the liberal Joint Council of Europeans and Natives thought that low wages were a legitimate grievance and submitted domestic budgets of single and married Africans in support of their views. But employers generally denied that African workers were being underpaid. The Commission found that the wages paid by Durban firms to African labourers varied considerably. The general rule was that the large employers paid adequate wages and provided rations and quarters, while the smaller employers did not provide facilities and paid lower wages.

Having identified an area of manoeuvre the Commission could not conclude a strategy to make economic concessions to African workers. No definite conclusions were arrived at and the Commission split into two opinions. The first, taken by Dr. Loram, was that there should be an enquiry into African wages through the Wage Board. He felt that the workers in Durban would feel that any other method would give them less than the law allowed and that the wage determination at Bloemfontein had satisfied both employers and workers. The other view, taken by Dr. Roberts and Senator van Niekerk, was that there should be a survey by an official who would then try to persuade employers paying inadequate wages to raise their standards. 'An officer with the confidence of the Natives and with sufficient standing to ensure the respect and goodwill of employers would be in a position to effect substantial amelioration and avoid action, in advance of public opinion, being taken

under the Wage Act.<sup>147</sup> A compulsory minimum level of wages for unskilled workers in Durban, it was argued, would take many more years to accomplish, and until then increases in African wages would be on an ad hoc basis. These differences in approach possibly reflected disagreements among large and small employers, or more probably varying degrees of emphasis on the importance of wage concessions in dampening the resistance of the workers.

The concessions to the workers were not to come in the economic but in the 'political' sphere as the Town Council moved fairly rapidly after the Native Affairs Commission report to establish a Native Advisory Board of 10 Africans and 4 town councillors. In contrast to the advisory boards elected in cities where there were established locations and ward organization, the board in Durban represented differing political organizations and workers elected directly in the compounds.<sup>148</sup> The Natal Native Congress, the ICU, four representatives from the various municipal barracks nominated by the Town Council, and two representatives from Government barracks, made up the African side of the Advisory Board. Johannes Sibiya represented the railway compound at the Point, Magcekeni Matsonsi the togt barracks in Bell Street, and Jeremiah Mkwanzazi the togt barracks in Dalton Road.<sup>149</sup> Concessions on wages seemed also possible when the town councillors reported that the Council had considered the two suggestions on African wages made by the Native Affairs Commission. Eventually it had been decided to make representations to the Union Native Affairs Department to ask for an investigation to be made into the wages of unskilled workers in Durban in terms of the Wage Act.<sup>150</sup> With the onset of the depression and the changing conditions of class struggle in Durban during this period, these rather ambiguous resolutions came to nothing.

With the continuing boycott of the beerhalls undermining the wide-ranging subsidies to the police, bureaucracy, and other municipal departments, it was not unlikely that the first major issue to be debated by the

Advisory Board was the possibility of bringing it to an end. The Town Councillors suggested there should be an attempt to come to some kind of solution of the boycott, but the reaction from the African representatives was wary and hesitant. Champion, who possessed some insight into the machinations of the bureaucracy, shrewdly demanded to see a copy of the Native Administration Account first. At a meeting on 19 February 1930, J.R. Msimang of the Natal Native Congress said that the boycott would continue indefinitely. The demands made at the start of the boycott had not been met and the tog worker who had had his badge removed still had not had it returned. The flow of subsidies was soon to bring out divisions between the settled urban workers and the migrants housed in compounds. A few weeks later the unrelenting posture of the Natal Native Congress changed when on 16 April 1930 the same speaker proposed the boycott should be brought to an end. Because of the boycott, income to the Native Administration Account was being stopped and pressure was being brought to bear on the married quarters built by the municipality which had very low rents and electricity supplied. If the boycott did not come to an end, the rates would have to be increased, he complained. In response Champion argued he was much more in favour of the Bloemfontein system which permitted home brewing.<sup>151</sup> The motion to end the beer boycott was not carried, but the tensions between different sections of the African working population were evident.

As the beer boycott continued and the resistance of the workers to the Native Affairs bureaucracy continued unabated, the Advisory Board was reorganized with the Natal Native Congress and the ICU having proportionately less representation. The Natal Native Congress, which was in the process of splitting, was granted one representative as was the ICU, while the railway barracks were apparently granted two extra representatives. The precise significance of these changes is not immediately clear, but the 'reorganization' was accompanied by the deportation of Champion from Durban by the Minister

of Justice. His deportation order followed his protests against the ICU representation being reduced to one, although the administrative decision was probably not solely precipitated by this factor. At a meeting on 8 September 1930 the Advisory Board extended its sympathy to Champion in connection with his banishment, but did not take its protests any further.<sup>152</sup> The heroicism of his position was somewhat blunted by the mayor writing to the Minister asking him to release Champion from his banishment since he had promised to behave and should not be made into a martyr. By the time Champion eventually returned he found his position on the Advisory Board as ICU representative taken by Ngcobo who claimed to be the Chairman of the ICU yase Natal.

Up to the point of the 'reorganization' of the Advisory Board no concrete gains had been made by the African representatives and with the changes being introduced the suspicion of the workers became even more clearly manifest. Having achieved nothing definite through the Board, the representatives were apparently loath to make public reports on what was being discussed to the workers who had elected them. The crisis in representation was most clearly evident among the togt workers who both possessed a keenly democratic tradition and were taking an increasingly radical political direction. On 26 November 1930 two delegates of the togt workers, Gumede and Ngcobo, petitioned the Advisory Board to replace Magekeni Matsonsi as the representative of togt workers at the barracks in Bell Street. These workers had asked Matsonsi to come to a meeting, but he had refused. A deputation of four was sent to interview him, but he declined to give them a hearing. Another deputation was sent and he had refused to interview them. 'He does not wish to see us and give us an account of his activity in the Board.' Yet he had been reappointed to the recognized Advisory Board by Chester. The delegates wanted to know who had elected him, where he had come from, and what matters and grievances he had presented to the Board. 'We do not wish to be led by a man we do not know. We were only told by

the authorities that he is our leader, and we know nothing of him. We declare that the entire natives of the Point barracks do not want him as their representative.'<sup>153</sup> The minutes of the Advisory Board do not provide any information on responses to this petition, but the demands for consultation and report-back meetings by the workers demonstrated an increasingly impatient mood with the Advisory Board and representatives who did not put forward the demands of the workers.

Towards the end of 1930 the attempt to stabilize relationships between the exploited and the government of property owners through the Advisory Board was being shown to have failed. The state action against Champion was possibly aimed to disrupt the ICU and increase the splits in the organization, but it was also an acknowledgement of the failure of conciliation. The representatives on the Board were coming under increasing pressure from an African working class searching for new tactics to throw off the weight of municipal and state control and to free their hands in confrontation with the employers.

The movement of African workers in Durban was unparalleled and requires a full discussion in its own right, and this follows in the next chapter. But the development of the municipality in Durban as the coordinating centre for counter-measures against the African working class does allow some conclusions to be drawn about the nature of the local state and its bureaucracy.

### Conclusion

Until comparatively recently the bourgeoisie in command of local authorities in the major industrial centres in South Africa followed paths of domination over the most advanced section of the working class which were not identical. The forms of class and racial domination have not been fixed and immutable from the point of formation of the South African state, the

ruling class strategy for continued domination is itself a response to working class struggle — the privileged position of the white working class, for example. Resistance from the oppressed classes has produced a continual striving for stable class rule as evidenced by numerous commissions of enquiry, the growth of a specialized 'Native Affairs' bureaucracy, and revised legislation. The expansion of the local and national state as an instrument for repressing and stabilizing class struggles certainly guaranteed the continued development of South Africa as a capitalist social formation. The expansion and specialization of the bureaucracy which was integral to the evolving state, in particular the distinctive local 'Native Affairs' bureaucracy, far from being favourable to welfare and social levelling as postulated by Weber, was precisely the instrument of the ruling class, gathering information on resistance, planning responses, and clearing the way for repression.<sup>154</sup> It possessed a political character which was hostile to the working class and siphoned its income from taxes on the African workers' means of subsistence. Although Weber argues that the 'spirit' of bureaucracy is formalism, he also writes there is a tendency towards 'a utilitarian point of view in the interest of the welfare of those under their (officials) authority'. But this is obscured by the formalistic spirit of the enactment of corresponding regulatory measures.<sup>155</sup> This conception, which also argues that capitalism allows the bureaucracy to develop 'in the most rational form', is contradicted by the importance of welfare as a means of dampening class resistance and providing an opening for social reformism. It is not so much the suffocating overdevelopment of officialdom in itself which provided the basis for racial oppression in its exact form, but rather its class character. Bound not only to the attainment of the objective of the bourgeois state, but also expressing in its actions and deliberations the markings and spirit of the class, its antagonism to the interests of the African working people was unquestioned.

The extraordinary resistance of African workers in Durban to the central features of their oppression in the beer monopoly, tax system, and

passes, established Durban as a leading area in the struggle against the urban forms of domination. Although faced by one of the most 'organized' groups of property owners in South African towns, the resistance of the workers precipitated, unexpectedly, one of the most severe crises in authority in any urban centre. Despite a particularly advanced 'Native Affairs' bureaucracy, class rule in the period 1925-30 was chronically unstable and required increasing use of nationally coordinated political and police action to maintain stability. Not having an urban location and compelling African workers to live in barracks, the ruling class found that this concentration of workers could be turned against employers and the state. Towards the late 1920s the African workers succeeded in turning the barracks into fortresses, requiring repeated attacks and national raids to return to the normalcy of centres of bourgeois control elsewhere. The barracks, which were centrally located and ensured the continuation of the cheap labour system, posed a contradiction for the ruling class: any mass mobilization of African workers immediately threatened the administration centres. While the forceful segregation of African workers in the Transvaal and Orange Free State permitted the development of political demonstrations in the locations (which met with the same repression as in Durban), in Durban similar actions had the immediate support of large numbers of militant workers in the town centre. Faced with instability of this order, the bourgeoisie was compelled to resort to the direct rule of repression.

Notes on Chapter 3

1. Natal Regional Survey (1952): 35. The increase in African population seems to have been most rapid during the closing phases of the war and the immediate post-war period.
2. Marwick (1919): 592
3. Ibid.: 606
4. do.: 608
5. do.: 601
6. For this important legislation see Davenport (1971). The legislation was also in response to the growth of inter-racial slum areas which threatened to submerge racial 'identity' in a wider class consciousness.
7. Taylor and Cragg (1922): 94
8. Ibid.: 79
9. do.: 76
10. Ibid.
11. do.: 75
12. do.: 86
13. Accounts of the ISL have tended to become dominated by interpretations of the later strategies for liberation in South Africa. In orthodox social history the ISL is presented as having the wrong approach to the SANNC and not championing resistance to national oppression of the African people. The propaganda work in popularizing Marxism and agitating has been thought to be insignificant, but the files of the Ministry of Justice and of Native Affairs present a rather different view. There were many excellent agitational pamphlets in African languages produced by the ISL. Some correction of prevalent views is provided by Johnstone (1979).  
  
It is not possible to go into all the questions of the ISL's failure as a revolutionary organization and its inability to lead strike action by African workers, the positive tendencies were swept away by the incomplete theory of the leading position of the African working class in the struggle for socialism in South Africa.
14. Marks (1970): 365
15. Walshe (1970): 38, 39
16. Wickens (1973): 129-130

17. Nicolson to Botha, 9 August 1918, SNA Transvaal, Volume 214. The account of the struggle over wages which follows is basically from this correspondence unless otherwise indicated.
18. See Natal Provincial Gazette, No 372, 9 November 1916.
19. The overlapping of principal representatives and capitalists in the local state indicates the 'simple' nature of the state as a means of class rule with unmediated relations between the exploited and exploiters.
20. Minutes of Council-in-Committee, 26 June 1918.
21. The issue of the leadership of the working class is certainly more complex than an opposition of leaders to the rank and file, and involves an analysis of the forms of ideological domination over the working class rather than an institutional theory of co-opted leadership and a revolutionary rank-and-file.
22. Ilanga lase Natal, 5 July 1918.
23. Ilanga lase Natal, 2 August 1918, and Natal Mercury, 12 August 1918. The demand for a shilling a day increase was identical to that being made by the Industrial Workers of Africa (formed jointly by the Transvaal Native Congress and the ISL) in Johannesburg.
24. The Natal Mercury, 3 August 1918, reported that evidence against the ISL in a Johannesburg trial had established there had been attention given to Durban. It reported the demands of the workers to double wages had been inspired by socialists. Employers were advised to forestall 'peremptory demands' by reporting all incidents to the authorities.
25. Natal Mercury, 18 August 1918.
26. *Ibid.*, 28 June 1918. It is implied that the togt workers' demand of 5s a day was made 'under mischievous inspiration' of the ISL. Dube could not have been referred to if, as the course of events demonstrates, he was opposed to 'sectional' wage demands.
27. Nicolson to Botha, 9 August 1918, SNA Transvaal, Volume 214. This file does not record Botha's response to these pleas by the anxious Mayor of Durban, but Dube was later warned against calling public meetings by the Resident Magistrate.
28. Natal Mercury, 15 August 1918.
29. *Ibid.*, 16 August 1918. Although not explicit, the editor seemed to have the ISL rather than Dube as the agitator in mind: 'We have amongst us those who, professing to be friends of the Native, would imbue him with notions and lead him into courses which will be harmful to the Native himself and spoil him for the sphere of labour which he is fitted to occupy'. This was an appeal to the ruling class to close ranks during a time of working class demands.

30. Ilanga lase Natal, 23 August 1918.
31. File 97/315E, No 1: Native Wages and Rations. Natal Archives.
32. The questioner at the meeting of 10 August 1918 had raised the issue of how the funds which had been gathered were being spent, although Dube had at one point mentioned a strike would require a strike fund this does not seem to have been the purpose of this collection. A strike fund would obviously require considerably more than these amounts.
33. The writer has tried, without success, to trace the Government Gazette proclaiming the new dipping tax. Regional and local taxes and levies were fairly arbitrarily exacted on the Africans resident in the reserves and, if anything, have become more numerous and oppressive over time.
34. File 97/315E, No 1, Notes of meeting of employers of Native labour held in Council Chambers, Municipal Buildings; Natal Archives.
35. The full English version of the pamphlet is published in The International, 25 April 1919, and subsequently republished in A. Lerumo, Fifty Fighting Years, Inkululeko Publications, London: 115-6.
36. They were charged both in terms of the Moratorium Act and the Riotous Assemblies Act.
37. The International, 25 April 1919.
38. Marwick referred to a leaflet produced by the ISL on 15 February 1919 which he said was 'not so pernicious'. Here, as elsewhere, it is not clear whether he was referring to a pamphlet produced by the ISL or the petition drawn up by Dube. There may have been other dock strikes which the writer did not uncover in the archives or newspapers, but most probably the authorities were confusing Dube's petition with ISL pamphlets. The 'overlap' may have been added to by some white socialists helping to distribute Dube's petition. See Natal Mercury, 14 August 1918.
39. The International, 2 May 1919.
40. The African heritage of chiefly absolutism among the Zulu is regarded with some ambiguity by African workers who may be proud of the tradition of resistance, but also hostile to the idea of absolute power being seized by any form of state.
41. Simons (1969): 217. The argument does not necessarily imply cowardice by the accused, although it is true that the ISL denied any connection with the sanitary workers' strike when charged with incitement in Johannesburg, and even shifted some of the blame on the Transvaal Native Congress. (Ibid. 209) The conduct of revolutionaries in court is a complicated issue, involving the continuity of organization as well as the need for unyielding public militancy.

42. Binns to Native Commissioner, Pietermaritzburg, 8 August 1919. File 210, SNA Transvaal Archives.
43. This account of the strike is derived basically from the Times of Natal, 17 July 1919. The strike was ignored by the other newspapers, possibly to stop other workers learning about the demands of the dock workers.
44. Binns to Chief Native Commissioner, Pietermaritzburg, File 210.
45. *Ibid.* and Times of Natal, 17 July 1919.
46. Simons (1969): 203.
47. The ruling class acknowledges this social fact during periods of mass upsurge by the working class, the police attempt to distance themselves from the defence of the immediate needs of the capitalists, in the interests of defending the ruling class as a whole.
48. File 97/315E, No 1, Memorandum on the Scale of Wages for Natives, Durban Municipality, Natal Archives.
49. Minutes of Native Affairs and Police Committee, 1 December 1919, Durban Municipality.
50. File 97/315E, No 2, Proceedings of meeting of employers of native labour convened by the Mayor of Durban on the 17th January, 1920, Durban Municipality, Natal Archives.
51. Ilanga lase Natal, 23 January 1920.
52. There is a discussion of the upsurge of working class action in 1920 in Simons (1969): 229-233. The 1920 mine strike is the subject of a special monograph by Bonner (1978).
53. On 13 December 1919 the dockers' wage was raised to 6s a day. Budlender (1976): 19. The African miners were earning 2s 3d per underground shift from 1 January 1920. Simons (1969): 231.
54. As late as 1937 the Communist Party under reformist leadership proposed a minimum wage demand of only 5s a day for African workers and 10s a day for white workers. African workers in 1920 were striking in support of a 10s a day demand. Simons (1969): 515. The ICU Conference in 1923 resolved to demand 10s a day for all workers. Simons (1969): 307.
55. Wickens (1973): 129. The writer is unable to trace the original source material on this strike.
56. The description of the strike is derived solely from the Natal Mercury, 6 March 1920; the strike was not reported in other newspapers. It is not clear from the report whether the togt strikers were employed by Nicol and Company, the 'active element' in previous strikes.

57. Natal Mercury, 8 March 1920.
58. Wickens (1973): 129
59. Natal Mercury, 20 January 1923.
60. File 20/15A Volume 1, Native Urban Areas Act.
61. African women in tribal society had the advantage of not being subjected to the patriarchal code of the great religions, their subordination was not as ideologically developed. In response to the growing independence of women, the colonial law systematically developed the legal subordination of women to the kraalhead and chief. This was a change made not out of genuine ignorance of the position of African women in tribal society but in an attempt to strengthen the patriarchal character of national and class domination.
62. S.C. 3, 1923: para 344 and 399. The officials claimed to have put about 10,000 women brewers out of business, which is somewhat of an exaggeration, but it does indicate the intensity with which working class family life was attacked in the towns.
63. Unlike the Chamber of Mines, local employers did not necessarily support total prohibition. If African workers spent their wages on liquor moderately and regularly it would increase their willingness to work, especially if the workers were saving up their wages before returning to the countryside. The complaint which is considered here is specific to the stevedoring trade, and only to those employers requiring a night shift.
64. van Onselen (1976): 81 discusses the British occupation of the Transvaal and the implementation of total prohibition.
65. Native Affairs, Police, and Fire Brigade Committee Agenda and Minutes, 1915. Durban Municipality. Natal Archives.
66. Ibid.
67. Do. This argument strengthened the demand of municipal officials for even greater controls.
68. Wickens (1973): 593
69. These early differences were later to become decisive splits between Gumede and the ICU on one hand, and Dube on the other. The differences in the African National Congress represented by these tendencies were over the necessity of workers' organization and attitudes towards the Soviet Union. Dube's initial response to the ICU in Natal is carried in the editorials of Ilanga on 4 July, 15 August, and 24 October 1924. This brief history of the ICU in Durban is derived basically from Wickens (1973), the writer being unable to consult Ilanga during the early period.

70. Kadalie (1970): 62, quoted in Wickens (1973): 198-199.
71. Preamble of the ICU constitution, Lerumo (1971): 53
72. A thorough investigation was made into the ICU branch accounts in Natal during a court case for libel, see the judgement in Wickens (1973): 447-449.
73. These are only some of the most important legal advances made by the ICU in Natal, a complete list drawn up by Champion is reproduced in Wickens (1973): 346-349.
74. South African Worker, 7 January 1927, quoted in Simons (1969): 256.
75. Simons (1969): 363-364 details the indifference or even strike-breaking activity of the ICU officials in the face of strike action by African workers.
76. Natal Mercury, 19 December 1925. Presumably the witness was arguing the ICU was instrumental in encouraging the workers to resist.
77. Natal Mercury, 4 January 1926.
78. *Ibid.*, 13 January 1926. Two of the accused were African, the other 'coloured'; the latter appearing in court covered with bloodstains. Evidently the police were taking advantage of their superior numbers in the cells.
79. Workers' Herald, 15 January 1926.
80. *Ibid.*, 15 May and 15 June 1925, quoted in Wickens (1973): 269. These industrial demands were possibly an attempt to regain the support of the dock workers who were reported to have joined the Bantu Union in Cape Town and repudiated the ICU in the years following the dock strike of 1919. The dock workers were also discussed at the Third Conference of the ICU when the decision was to demand a minimum wage of 10s for all workers. Wickens (1973): 392, and Simons (1969): 307.
81. Workers' Herald, 15 January 1926.
82. Official Year Book, 16, 1933-34.
83. Wickens (1973): 361.
84. This account of the strike is derived from the Natal Advertiser, 16 June 1927, and Natal Mercury, 17 June 1927.
85. Simons (1969) 363. Ringrose (1949?): 50, reports the ICU was 'very active' on the coal mines, apparently even posting up propaganda and meeting notices at some mines.
86. Wickens (1973): 594-597 provides various estimates of ICU membership in Natal and Durban.
87. Natal Mercury, 11 July 1929.

88. Minutes of Evidence, Native Riots Commission, July 1929, p.25.
89. The chronology of the resistance to the beerhalls comes basically from the Minutes of Evidence of the Judicial Commission of Enquiry into 'The Native Riots of Durban', by Justice D. de Waal. File 43/323/1. Durban Municipality, Natal Archives.
90. A drink of fermented porridge.
91. Quite why immediate hostility should be directed against the Indian storekeeper is not clear unless he also was selling mahewu, apparently he resented competition from petty traders within the compound. See below.
92. Minutes of Evidence, p.45.
93. Ibid., p. 139.
94. Do., p.350.
95. Do., p. 187.
96. Natal Mercury, 10 July 1929.
97. In interviews in 1972 Champion insisted that all the dock workers were members of the ICU, but it is only with the support granted by the ICU for the beer boycott initiated by the dock workers that an organized relationship between the union and the workers is evident. Up to this time ICU support for the strikes and demands of the dock workers is notable by its absence.
98. Natal Mercury, 10 July 1929.
99. Minutes of Evidence, p.50.
100. Ibid., p. 141.
101. Natal Mercury, 10 July 1929.
102. Minutes of Evidence, p.63.
103. An academic to whom the first draft of this thesis was shown thought these listed grievances and demands should be omitted as trivial.
104. Minutes of Evidence, p. 123.
105. Ibid., p. 190.
106. This is not to deny that Indian people, workers, petty bourgeois, and bourgeois, have become at certain moments identified with the exploitation of merchant capital in the consciousness of African workers. The point will be returned to in a subsequent chapter.
107. This fact illustrates the ambiguity of the ICU leadership, representing the workers but drawn from foremen.
108. Minutes of Evidence, p. 158.

109. Natal Mercury, 6 August 1929.
110. Sachs (1975): 228-229 states that lynching is unknown in modern South Africa and argues it is superfluous in a society 'where strong law enforcement agencies act as agents of terror'. At moments when there has been a decisive challenge to the state, as during the 1976 uprising, the state has encouraged vigilantes in protection of property.
111. One of the reasons given by Smuts in ordering troops against the white miners on strike in 1922 was the fact that African workers had been attacked by white vigilantes. The hundreds of white workers killed in the suppression of this strike died not because of Smuts' concern for the lives of African people (to the contrary!) but because they posed a challenge to the profit system.
112. Commission of Enquiry, Native Riots at Durban, File 57/323. Durban Municipality. Natal Archives, p.21 and p.13.
113. Different types of 'get drunk quick' spirits made from a variety of ingredients by African women. These cheap spirits, which can be compared to the use of gin in the history of the English working class, provided the strongest competition to utshwala which was brewed by the municipality to contain the minimum percentage of alcohol. De Waal estimated there would be 38,000 brewers, which must be something of an exaggeration as this is what he estimated to be the African population of Durban in 1929!
114. Commission of Enquiry, p.3.
115. Ibid., p.21.
116. Natal Mercury, 11 July 1929. Champion asserted that the ICU would be blotted out if there was an authoritative channel through to the bureaucracy.
117. HOAD, 8 August 1929, C 584, 587, quoted in Simons (1969): 417.
118. Natal Mercury, 7 August 1929.
119. Ibid., 24 September 1929.
120. Do., 25 September 1929.
121. Natal Mercury, 13 November 1929.
122. A few points could be made about the 'regional' and 'national' phases of action by the African working class; during the First World War Durban African workers were slightly less active, during the late 1920s and depression very much more active, during the 1942 wave of strikes in phase with the Rand, during the period 1958-61 a leading centre, in the early 1970s again leading in mass strike action, but in 1976 definitely out of phase with the popular resistance to the apartheid state. This

attempt to describe the relationship of workers in Durban to the activity of the working class as a whole is possibly suggestive of trends within class formation and class consciousness over a long period.

123. There is a Zulu saying which acknowledges the impossibility of unity between leaders who worship their personality: 'You can't have two bulls in one kraal'.
124. Ilanga lase Natal, 5 April 1929.
125. Natal Mercury, 5 June 1918.
126. Ilanga lase Natal, 31 May 1929.
127. *Ibid.*, 21 June 1929.
128. The first recorded use of the term inyati to describe the togt workers is made in Ilanga lase Natal, 21 June 1929, although the self-description may have arisen from a considerably earlier period.
129. See Appendix A.
130. Minutes of Evidence, p.361.
131. Native Economic Commission, UG 22/1932, p.327.
132. *Ibid.*, p.224. Convictions were initially much higher in the Transvaal but in 1929 they exceeded the Transvaal for the first time.
133. Natal Mercury, 14 November 1929, and Simons (1969): 421.
134. This description is drawn basically from the Natal Mercury, 15 November 1929, and Simons (1969): 419-420.
135. Natal Mercury, 15 November 1929.
136. *Ibid.*
137. *Do.*, 18 November 1929.
138. Quoted in Simons (1969): 420.
139. Natal Mercury, 15 November 1929.
140. Perham (1974): 191-201.
141. Report of the Native Affairs Commission on matters relating to the Native Population in Durban, 12 December 1929. File 57/323A/1. Durban Municipality. Native Advisory Board. p.4-5.
142. Minutes of Evidence, p.364.
143. Report, p.6.
144. *Ibid.*, p.3. My emphasis.

145. The Commission, of course, imposed its views on the responses of the witnesses as happens in all enquiries in which the primary concern is the maintenance of order rather than insight into social conditions. But even if this point is accepted the accent on the wage issue has to be explained.
146. Significantly also is the lack of wage demands in the list of demands drawn up by the workers in consultation with the ICU.
147. Report, p.4. My emphasis. 'Public opinion' here most definitely refers to the feelings of employers and property owners and not the views of the workers.
148. During an interview with H. Selby Msimang in 1970 he presented a fairly developed system of representation through 'wardsmen' in Bloemfontein in the early 1920s. The younger workers wrote off these representatives as conciliationist.
149. Minutes of Native Affairs Committee, 20 December 1929. File 57/323A/1. Durban Municipality, Native Advisory Board.
150. Ibid., 14 January 1920.
151. Do. The contradictions within Champion's position were also developing; before Justice de Waal he had claimed to be a teetotaler opposed to all sale of liquor. Possibly with the growing demand from African women for the right to brew and sell beer, he was shifting his position under pressure.
152. Do.
153. Petition, 26 November 1930. File 57/323A/1.
154. 'The development of bureaucracy greatly favours the levelling of social classes and this can be shown historically to be the normal tendency.' Max Weber (1964), Social and Economic Organization, Free Press, p.340.
155. Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### Pass burning and the Communist Party

Never, under the sun has a nation been so shackled with the chains of slavery. We are not even allowed to voice our opinion on the state of affairs in our Motherland. Why not awake and stand on our feet? Men, women, and young women, we must support organisations that fight for our freedom.

Final message from Johannes Nkosi, Communist Party and dock leader, December 1930

We are made to work as if we were a people without souls — as if we were a machine.

Dock workers, Umsebenzi, 5 November 1932

As South Africa entered the world-wide depression, the tendencies which were evident in Durban during the late 1920s became even more pronounced. The social movement of the African working class in Durban was definitely in a different phase to the other major industrial centres, as the ruling class sought solution after solution in attempts to regain decisive control. Despite a number of measures mixing tactical reforms with further repression, the beer boycott continued and even gained strength in some ways. The contradictions which were so obvious within the ICU; Champion's domineering and self-seeking leadership and its inability to provide ideological and tactical leadership after the national police raid, came to a head in a number of complex splits. After commanding mass support in the post-June 1929 period, Champion dithered between carrying forward the struggle for higher wages and against the passes, and securing himself a career as a shopkeeper. Early in 1930 he declared that the Communists were opposed to African interests and 'that the capitalist class must be created among all non-European races in South Africa'. Without such a class there would be 'no hope of liberation', for history revealed that 'the capitalist is and always will be the backbone of every country'.<sup>1</sup> Armed with these views and an increasingly commercial view of the ICU as a source of entertainment for African workers, the divergences between his leadership and the leftwards trend within the African working class were clearly *in evidence*. But while the formal organization was rent with disputes and splits, the workers were united in strengthening their opposition to the policies of national and class oppression and responsive to the Communist Party during the phase in which it attempted to take over the reins of leadership in the struggle for national liberation.<sup>2</sup> The foundations of cell organization within production laid during this period also served the dock workers in the times of repression which followed.

The Communist Party, which had been racked by dissension over the Black Republic resolution, was instructed by the Comintern to step up its

activity towards 'the complete carrying through of the nationalist revolutionary struggle, and, as the subsequent stage, the socialist revolution'. Its strategy, as outlined by the Executive Committee of the Communist International, was to act as the vanguard in the revolutionary nationalist movement. Permeated with a view that the capitalist world was entering a period of degeneration in which the Communist Parties should seize on the revolutionary possibilities completely independently of other organizations of the exploited and oppressed, the Comintern executive accused the South African party of 'lagging behind the growing mass discontent' in the country. In the struggle for national liberation the Communist Party was to repudiate the 'petty bourgeois nationalist parties' and act alone. Its duty was to develop a core of full-time professional revolutionaries, form cells in factories and streets, organize revolutionary trade unions, and to launch a peasants' movement for the seizure of land.<sup>3</sup> It is from this perspective that the Communist Party launched an organizational drive and prepared for massive pass-burning demonstrations on Dingaan's Day, 16 December 1930.

In Durban the communists took the opportunity afforded by the determined resistance of the workers to the tax system, beer monopoly, and oppressive municipal regime to establish a branch. Wolton, the secretary of the Communist Party, who campaigned as Native Representative candidate in 1929 along with S. P. Bunting, helped to establish a branch of the Communist Party during a stormy visit. Many of the workers who joined were members of the ICU yase Natal and had loyalty to both organizations.<sup>4</sup> With the removal of Champion from the arena of the struggle, the state had ironically opened the road to the communists who were determined to seize the opportunity of leading mass struggles against national oppression. Champion encouraged a relationship with the Communist Party on occasion, but before the de Waal Commission he renounced Marxism and said that the aim of communists was to dispossess landowners such as himself.<sup>5</sup> Not being capable or willing to develop propaganda to any level, Champion tolerated some influence of the

Communist Party in the ICU yase Natal (in contrast to Kadalie) and did not oppose speakers who argued for workers to be members of both organizations.

The growth of the Communist Party in Durban was closely associated with one of the new generation of African communists, Johannes Nkosi, previously a farm labourer, kitchen 'boy', and an ICU official who had joined the Communist Party in 1926. The Communist Party had developed steadily after he had arrived in Durban to organize a branch shortly before the beer hall violence in June 1929. Organizing with enthusiasm, Nkosi built up Communist Party membership among African workers with help from the white Communists (one of whom was on the Town Council) selling Umsebenzi (the party newspaper) and starting to organize a dockers, railway, and transport union.<sup>6</sup> A rather ambiguous relationship developed between Nkosi, leader of an 'Africanised' Communist Party branch and eager to enter into confrontation with an oppressive state, and Champion, who headed a mass organization, was unwilling to develop a decisive strategy of resistance, and was well aware that the Native Affairs Commission had recommended that he should be banished from Durban. Nkosi would attend ICU meetings and ask Champion for permission to sell Umsebenzi. 'Sometimes permission would be given, sometimes refused, according to whether Champion was at that particular moment in a rebellious mood or feeling the wisdom of placating the authorities'.<sup>7</sup>

When Champion was finally removed from Durban in October, Nkosi and the African members of the Communist Party were in effective command of the resistance to the Durban system, and in particular the pass laws. Faced with criticism for 'tailing' behind the popular resistance of the masses, the Communist Party drew up plans for nation-wide burning of passes and a general strike on Dingaan's Day 1930. The militancy of the Communist Party in leading the resistance to national oppression matched the consciousness of the African workers in Durban who had sustained the boycott of the beerhalls for eighteen months.<sup>8</sup> As the workers looked for leadership to

provide them with a way forward from the somewhat deadlocked beer boycott, the spirit of conservatism and conciliation mixed with defiance of Champion became displaced by the unrelenting hostility of radical togt members of the ICU at the Point and of Communist Party members to the capitalist state. In the build-up to the Dingaans Day demonstrations, Johannes Nkosi addressed himself particularly to the togt workers who had proved themselves to be the leading force in the resistance. At a meeting held on the sand dunes near the Bell Street compound, the togt workers were addressed by Mtolo of the ICU and Johannes Nkosi on 9 November 1930. Nkosi was reported to have made a fiery speech, adding the tactical questions to a denunciation of the racially oppressive state. 'To hell with Pirow and the Riotous Assemblies Act. I pray that the ship conveying Hertzog who has been overseas to obtain more power to penalize the Natives may sink at sea, and Hertzog's soul go to hell.' A leaflet had been distributed carrying the following slogans: Down with Pirow, Slave Laws, Away with Passes on Dingaans Day, Burn the Passes! Alarmed with the response of the workers to Nkosi, the compound manager, Gray, instructed his indunas to report on Communist Party meetings held with togt workers. These informers said (although their statements cannot be *accepted* uncritically) that Nkosi had told the workers to carry their sticks on 16 December, and that any police in the streets, or anyone working for the Corporation, should be killed. Another induna reported that Nkosi had said that anyone entering the beerhalls would be killed.<sup>9</sup> Whether these reports by collaborators in the compounds and at work were true is difficult to establish; later it was argued that the demonstration on 16 December was peaceful and that the police made an unprovoked attack. It was also unlikely that the authorities would have tolerated this level of agitation for any time.<sup>10</sup>

An increasingly alarmed bourgeois authority searched for more information about the agitation and for a strategy to defeat the workers' resistance. The Native Welfare Officer, a descendant of Shepstone, was requested to

make regular reports on the Communist movement among Africans in Durban to the Native Affairs Committee. The welfare provided by the town council in the wake of the Native Affairs Commission report was materializing as both a spying agency and the 'soft' option in the municipality's counter-attack. While the CID specialized in infiltrating the workers' movement, the bourgeoisie still required more detached observations, possibly as a balance against hysterical over-estimation of the resistance. The initial observations of the welfare officer tended in the opposite direction: there were few African members of the Communist Party and these were concentrated at the Point, he reported. He did not expect anything dramatic as forecast by Nkosi for Dingaan's Day, and apparently this was also the view of the Chief Constable and the Additional Native Commissioner.<sup>11</sup> If this assessment had validity late in October, it was certainly challenged by the entrance of new forces in the resistance as African women entered formidably on the political arena. Suffering under a nationally oppressive regime which removed their basis for material emancipation in the towns, and limited their income in the 'take-home' pay of the men, the women acted (as history would confirm) with great vigor and determination. Dispensing with the shackles of patriarchal domination which were most acutely forged in the colonial period, the women charged the men with having failed to defeat the beer monopoly. On 20 November 1930 the Native Affairs Department received a report that the African women were saying 'the men have failed and we women will show them what we can do'. The women planned to take, as yet unspecified, action on Dingaan's Day. A considerable movement among African women was later reported around the strategy of holding a conference in Durban on the beer question, and publishing findings which would include an extensively signed petition to request the Minister of Native Affairs to remove the existing restrictions on brewing utshwala in town or country at homes or kraals.<sup>12</sup> Although the women's movement appears from this report to have been somewhat sidetracked into constitutional proceedings, their entry into the struggle against the Durban system at a political level showed there could be no turning back from the inexorable confrontation.

Faced with the uncompromising hostility to the passes, beer monopoly, and taxes imposed on the African people, <sup>and the intervention of</sup> the Communist Party, a coalition of oppositional forces <sup>against the mass movement</sup> began to emerge. Champion's replacement on the Advisory Board, James M. Ngcobo, made a statement before this Board of the ICU yase Natal's attitude to the planned demonstrations and burning of passes. Although complaining of the pass system which 'had the effect of branding the Native as a slave', he entirely opposed the initiative of the Communist Party and did not want to be identified with the demonstration. Africans were leaving town, he said, because they realized there would be a disturbance on Dingaan's Day. 'These alleged disturbances were of communistic origin and whether any good or bad results were achieved by this demonstration, the ICU would claim no responsibility'.<sup>13</sup> Coming four days after Kadalie denounced the pass burning campaign, this statement made a further contribution to the gathering counter-offensive to the first nationally coordinated anti-pass campaign. The ICU yase Natal washed its hands of the protest against the passes, and the path was opened for Nkosi to take over the leadership at a crucial moment.

Worse than the renunciation of any connection with the pass burning was the actively supportive part played by the ICU yase Natal to the municipal authorities. In keeping with the counter-offensive mounted by the Native Affairs bureaucracy, the ICU struggled for political domination over the restive workers and provided a platform for the welfare officer. When the communists held a series of meetings at Cartwright Flats in the centre of town during the weekend before Dingaan's Day, which fell on Tuesday, the Native Welfare Officer came to act as an essential link of communication between the ICU, the Native Affairs bureaucracy, and the police who were preparing the 'hard' option of the bourgeoisie to continued resistance. He attended the meetings of the ICU at Cartwright Flats, which were directly competitive and called on the 3,000 who attended to be calm and act in a 'constitutional way'. Elated with the apparent success he had in dampen-

ing the flames of resistance, he reported: 'I was given an excellent hearing and reception. The ICU prolonged their meeting until late that evening in order to keep away their members from going across the Railway line where the Communists were holding their meeting.'<sup>14</sup> With such compliance from the social reformists in the opposition to united action, it seemed as though the question of resistance could be solved through the political intervention of the liberal wing of the Native Affairs bureaucracy.

The day before the demonstration the welfare officer had long interviews with the Chief Constable, the Native Commissioner, the Chairman of the Native Affairs Committee, Chester of the Native Affairs Department, ICU leaders and many white and black persons who had been 'alarmed by the speeches heard at the Communist meetings'. The ICU became even more deeply involved in the preparation of repression when J. London, the ICU leader who had accompanied the togt workers' deputation to Chester in June 1929, went with the welfare officer to interview the Native Commissioner. A further meeting with Chester and London, at which the 'whole situation' was discussed, was held in the afternoon. The flurry of activity between the municipal and central government departments and the close interaction with leading members of the ICU gave the authorities the opportunity of planning a common response to the pass burning. The municipal police, advised by Detective Sergeant Arnold (nicknamed *Tshaka*) of the CID, were also able to make their plans although these are not publicly available.<sup>15</sup>

### Pass burning and suppression

The results of the agitation by the communists and the counter-offensive by the municipality were not predetermined; what developed may not have been anticipated by either party. But the African workers of Durban, tempered in the struggle against the municipality in an organized manner since 1925, were extraordinarily responsive to the first opportunity to deal a *powerful* blow against national and class oppression. In emphatic

contrast to the cautious response of African workers in the other major industrial centres, the resistance turned into a bitter struggle against control by municipal and central state authorities.

Africans began to assemble at Cartwright's Flats at 'a very early hour' and as the day progressed a steady stream of people were attracted by two speakers. A bearded man wearing a fez and a flowing red robe gathered in the passes and gave a red card denoting membership of the Communist Party in return. In possible competition with the meeting, the Native Women's Congress was held at the ICU hall to consider the beerhall issue. Despite frequent rainfall the crowd increased until there were about 1,000 present at midday. One of the speakers said: 'This is the end of the pass. It is this that has made it impossible to look after our children and has caused us to eat dirt. No more shall we carry our passes and put money in Pirow's bottomless bay.'<sup>16</sup> Other speakers were reportedly messianic; promising fire from heaven to burn the Native Affairs Commission's office and warships to come to their aid.<sup>17</sup> But Nkosi was loudly applauded when he produced his pass documents and gave a reasoned but spirited speech: 'Let us give the Government a big Christmas box. There is going to be no trouble. The people who say there is going to be are telling lies. We are going to burn our passes, and when we have done that we will finish.' Dampened by the rain the passes needed match after match but eventually they blazed among cheers from the crowd. Many more African workers assembled, and the hats were sent around again. The gathering remained peaceful but enthusiastic, by 1630 more than 2,000 passes and tax receipts had been burnt and a procession began to form. The Chief Constable, Whitsitt, ordered the workers to stop and a large force of the borough police attacked the meeting, making directly towards the table where the speakers were standing. Nkosi was shot and struck down while still on the platform appealing to the crowd not to offer violence. The African demonstrators fought back with sticks and stones. In the attack on the enormous gathering Johannes Nkosi

and three others were killed and twenty others seriously wounded, mainly by African constables armed with assegais.<sup>18</sup> The dead had been hacked with assegais, their skulls severely fractured, and none had less than seven serious wounds.

After the meeting had been routed the CID and South African Police arrived in lorries from where they had been waiting in reserve. Armed with rifles, tear gas, and gas masks, they pursued the demonstrators who regrouped in the streets. *On top of* this bloody suppression, arrests were made, and twenty-six demonstrators convicted of public violence, four being sentenced to six months' hard labour.<sup>19</sup> The Native Welfare Officer who had waited in his office the whole day ready for any call was not summonsed for advice.

In this way, the mass resistance to the passes and beer monopoly was beaten to death. Despite the suppression, however, the communists gained enormously in prestige as political combatants against the racially oppressive state in comparison to the equivocation or outright hostility of the African petty bourgeois leadership to a decisive confrontation with the state. Dube, writing in Ilanga lase Natal only three days after the savage attack at Cartwright Flats and while those arrested were waiting trial, dismissed the leadership provided by communists like Nkosi and rejected the tactics of confrontation. These views were not even balanced with criticism of the police action. He philosophised about the question of leadership: 'it is true that the nation is guarded by the leaders' who are 'the chiefs or respected people' whose work it was to 'look after the people'. But during the Dingaan's Day meeting there were no known leaders present, only 'new faces'. The chiefs and leaders of the people had no say on the issue of passes, although the speeches made were 'surprising'. Arguing in favour of the stability of the countryside, he blamed the bloodshed on those he had previously described as 'detrribalised'. 'It is these new people who have left home to come and work

here who created this riot.' Dube presented an alternative of constitutional intercession to the struggle in the towns.

The laws of this country are passed at Cape Town. That is where passes can be abolished or amended. The cities and police have no power on passes. When a law is being passed in Parliament it is made by those elected by voters. It is the only place where they can change the law. To insult those who make laws can not solve the issue.<sup>20</sup>

He warned those who burnt their passes the law had not disappeared and passes would have to be produced when demanded by the police. Views like these were representative of an important section of the African petty bourgeoisie who stressed petitions, deputations, and constitutionalism, but were out of temper with the mass of workers who eagerly gave their passes to be burnt. By refusing to condemn the action of the police, Dube implicitly supported the vicious repression which continued unabated.

Reeling under the force of two antagonistic movements: the eagerness of the workers to continue the struggle, and the ruthless determination of police experts such as Arnold to eliminate the Communist Party; the leadership attempted to defend the members and go underground. The atmosphere of the moment is captured by Roux; African workers wanting to defy the police and not caring for secret meetings, treachery in the ranks, continued pass burnings, and the relentless pressure of the state.<sup>21</sup> The Communist Party branch turned towards training cadres, setting up cells, and organizing seamen and dock workers. 'The old idea of the formation of groups composed of loose and unrelated elements is giving place to the Bolshevik form of organization — concentration groups, factory cells, nuclei,' wrote Albert Nzula, a Communist Party leader responsible for trade union work. Night classes were being held and soon these students would be taking up leadership.<sup>22</sup> As early as January 1931 a great influx of members was reported into the Dockers, Railwaymen, and Transport Union branch in Durban.<sup>23</sup> But even with determined attempts to organize underground (the first in political history

in South Africa), the sweeping raids and intelligent penetration of party ranks by spies disorganized the movement as a force in mass political action. Members of the party were particularly vulnerable to police raids because they were conspicuous by their lack of passes and tax receipts; workers being sentenced to a week's imprisonment for every year's tax receipt not in their possession back to 1926.<sup>24</sup> In the wake of the Dingaan's Day police attack more than 200 of the most active communists had been deported, and blows of this order could not be sustained for long.<sup>25</sup> Contrary to the Comintern's conception of imminent revolutionary upsurge, the growing economic crisis of the depression forced the African working class on the defensive, and further political advance would only be made by movement in the economic arena. Yet an emphasis on trade union organization was not the only question raised by the terror exercised by the state, important though this was, and there was also the demand for arms by African workers in Durban.<sup>26</sup> The urgency of resistance had raised the necessary issue of workers' self-defence in the towns as well as trade unions to defend the economic interests of the workers during the depression.

#### Trade unions and the economic crisis

Although the South African economy did not decline as drastically as others during the world depression of the early 1930s, the working class, and in particular African workers, suffered an abrupt increase in impoverishment. In bourgeois social studies for the first time there appeared a recognition of a large relative surplus population, if not actual unemployment, and of the dissolution of the reserve economy. From this it followed that African workers earning wages based on the convention of a rural subsidy were being paid below the value of their labour power. Mabel Palmer, who wrote as the depression was taking hold of the South African economy, argued that African workers were not receiving 'true' wages which would provide for the needs of an adult man and the cost of raising his family. With the increasing impoverishment of the reserves the wage relationship was dominant:

'His livelihood in the reserves is becoming the supplement; his wages are his real support.' The cheap labour system, she argued, was maintained by the remorseless increase in the reserve army of labour by capital 'pressing constantly into the areas where subsistence economy will still provide a substantial subsidy in aid of wages'.<sup>27</sup> The cash nexus had its own dynamic and was breaking down the duality between 'the machine-, money-, and capital-using civilization of Europe, and the primitive subsistence economy of tribal communities'. From this argument she drew the conclusion that political segregation in South Africa was impossible.

Such an analysis provided a recognition of the general level of proletarianization of the African working people, but not of the force of the depression in even further reducing living standards. In Durban there was a considerable reduction in the number of registered African workers from 30,864 in 1929/30 to 24,243 in 1932/33. The workers seem to have extended their working period and renewed monthly contracts in the face of rising unemployment. In a struggle to maintain their living standards the workers were being forced to increase their total hours worked, making the problems of the unemployed even more acute.<sup>28</sup> For the black proletariat in Durban and surrounding areas conditions were appalling in terms of poverty, housing and disease. In evidence to the Native Economic Commission medical officers said that family shanty housing was unfit for habitation and infant mortality alarmingly high. In 1927 four out of five African infants born in hospitals died, in 1930 this was lowered to two out of five.<sup>29</sup> The infant mortality rate fluctuated drastically from year to year as the statistics included cases brought into town when ill, but the medical authorities acknowledged a general increase in diseases contributing to early death. The wages of African workers, which had not shown any appreciable increase during the 1920s were forced down; the wages for the first job of African workers in the category under 10s increasing from 13 per cent in 1926/28 to 30 per cent in 1932/34.<sup>30</sup> For the unemployed the position was desperate,

many reportedly lying on the ground 'weakened to the point that they can no longer move'.<sup>31</sup>

Faced with the decline of living standards of African workers in the towns and rising unemployment, liberals argued against any measures to increase wages as this would cause a rush to the towns. Mabel Palmer, in giving evidence to the Native Economic Commission, even argued for the most stringent system of passes instead to protect urban African workers from migrants. Since in Durban the authorities were opposed to the growth of a permanent working class she argued that 'every effort should be made to get a decent well-paid permanent body of Natives'. Propagandists should be sent to the country districts to discourage migrants from coming to town but 'if all other methods failed ... she would be prepared to see further restrictions until matters were remedied'.<sup>32</sup> Only four months after the bitter resistance to the pass system had been crushed by the police after 3,000 passes had been burned, the liberals of the town were proposing even more drastic controls in the interests of splitting the African working class into two distinct groups.

While the response of the liberals to the rapid growth of unemployment was to demand even more repressive controls to keep out the wave of migrant workers from the towns, this policy reflected more an attack on the African working class as a whole rather than a reasoned (but perverse) response from measured changes in urban employment. Contradictory to the hysterical view of a tidal wave of unemployed sweeping through the towns, in Durban at least there was a surprising decline in the immediate reserve army of labour. Despite drought in middle and northern parts of Zululand increasing the indebtedness of African homesteads and causing dire impoverishment, the number of workseekers registered in Durban dropped from 42,300 to 26,000 between 1928/29 and 1929/30 and even further in following years.<sup>33</sup> To some extent

migrants to Durban could find work on the mines where employment was increasing, or for desperately low wages on the farms, but what was taking place among African workers in town was a sharpening of the differences between experienced and employed workers and shorter-term migrant workers.<sup>34</sup> Municipal officers reported an exodus from the town when the slow-down in production became marked, which was accompanied by a drop in the 'floating population' of African workseekers. Those who were employed showed greater determination to remain in employment the more trade and industry became depressed.<sup>35</sup> This tendency was strongly reinforced by steadily worsening conditions in the reserves; caught between the dual forces of declining employment and increasing rural impoverishment, African workers extended the length of their contract to sustain their income. These processes were not as voluntary as presented here, the social power which the increase in proletarianization represented <sup>for the employers</sup> being resisted by the workers from a weaker base. Rural impoverishment was increased by the vigorous enforcement of both the poll tax and a special provincial tax on cattle of 1s per head and on sheep and goats of 6d per head.<sup>36</sup> In the towns Africans were dismissed by the municipalities and the 1930 amendment to the Native Urban Areas was enforced to provide powers of deportation of those declared 'idle, dissolute or disorderly', and to block the entry of women.<sup>37</sup> Through these draconian measures it is reported that over 1,000 African workers were expelled from Durban in 1930 and the reign of terror which fell on politically advanced African workers was a continuation of these policies of repelling the unemployed from the towns. State intervention of this order was a response to both the level of resistance of the workers and the international crisis of capital. In essence, the burden of the crisis was shifted on the shoulders of the working class and particularly the most exploited and oppressed.

In these unpropitious times the Communist Party branch attempted to build a seamen and harbour workers' union to defend the living standards of this most advanced section of the African working class in Durban. What

evidence is available suggests that the communists found it difficult to make the transition from open agitation to the semi-secret organization of workers in specific industries. The branch attempted to keep up a political initiative which would force back the repression on the basis of the popular resistance to paying the poll tax. In a pamphlet produced in April 1931 the party tried to keep alive 'the spirit of Johannes Nkosi' and called for a strike on May Day 1931.<sup>38</sup> The poll tax was described as a law which should cause an African uprising. 'The monies you pay such as the Poll Tax, give the Government power over you so that you must not have any rights, and the Government out of this money pays the Police, and the Magistrates and to build gaols so that you have no way of getting out of bondage. When you pay Poll Tax you provide the Government with a stick to fight you.' It urged its readers to refuse to pay the tax, and promised that on May Day 1931 'a great change will come about'. 'All the workers will cease work, not one will go to work on that day even if the employer does not permit. The streets in South Africa will be crowded — Johannesburg, Potchefstroom, Cape Town and other places even here in Durban.' The tactic was to stay away from work and face the Police. The national day of action so convincingly promised is not mentioned in any of the histories of the Communist Party and could have been the inspired idea of the writer alone. The evident lack of success of the strike call exposed the danger of the undisciplined agitation and an *undefined* strategy. How were the workers to continue the struggle against the passes as well as the poll tax? What would be the tactics if the strike call was not followed? From a reformist perspective Dube wrote about the 'poor unsophisticated Natives' who were deluded by the new leadership. He criticized the ideas of the Communist Party from a strategic analysis. 'One circular issued by the Communist Party advised Natives to fight for a Native Republic in this country and that to a people who cannot sustain a siege for a single day, who have no arms, leaders and an army, under a Government that is armed to the teeth in readiness for any rising or apparent rising against its authority.'<sup>39</sup> Even though the same article supports the

advice to Africans to buy land instead of supporting the struggle to restore the land to the people, a fanciful solution to the crisis, Dube was in a stronger position in this criticism; the connection between popular agitation and the question of seizing state power had to be developed. The most pressing issue of the time was how to organize and survive under the fierce repression which accompanied the economic crisis and was depleting the advanced workers in Durban without abandoning a revolutionary perspective.

An apparent answer to the question of how to establish deep links with the African working class and defend their interests came with the Seamen and Harbour Workers Union (SHWU), and Ikaka Labasebenzi (The Workers' Shield). Both were initiated to defend the interests of the workers: at work and against persecution by the police. The African Federation of Trade Unions (AFTU), a coordinating body established by the Communist Party, concentrated on support for a national transport union as a key sector of the economy. In comparison with the mass support of the ICU in all its phases, the membership of the AFTU was ridiculously small; in April 1933 there were 821 members. Nzula, as the secretary of the AFTU, felt the movement was 'unable to make use of the full arsenal of the methods of class struggle, and plunged from one extreme to the other, either continuing its activities of providing legal aid to union members, or calling general strikes on any pretext without adequate preparation'. But despite its insignificant membership he claimed 'its ideological influence is substantially greater'.<sup>40</sup> But this was necessarily diffuse because of its emphasis on mobilizing unemployed workers, an inherently unstable grouping in South Africa, and its inability to make advances in the basic sectors of the economy. 'The Federation constantly adopted the line of least resistance, limiting its activities to light industry, whereas the need was to direct its main effort at the basic sectors of industry, particularly at the miners and agricultural workers.'<sup>41</sup> The area of dock employment should have been where most organizational advance was possible; the workers in

Cape Town were organized in the Cape Town Stevedore and Dock Workers' Union, and those in Durban had proved their capacity to engage in struggle with the employers and the state on numerous occasions. There was also the added advantage of the Seamen's Revolutionary International which fought racism in employment and was able to smuggle literature and communicate ideas from country to country.

While the Communist Party was making initial steps in the formation of the SHWU, the togt workers were conducting a struggle for democratic control over their representatives on the Native Advisory Board. The demands of the workers were increasingly urgent and indicated a changed emphasis from resistance to the beer monopoly and harsh conditions in the barracks to the central question of wages and taxation. With their employment determined by the changes in the trade cycle, the dock workers were in the front line of the decrease in employment, with workers being employed only two days a week. The total amount of cargo handled by dock workers declined from the highest post-war figure of 7,869 thousand metric tons in 1929 to the bottoming of the depression in trade of 4,677 thousand metric tons in 1932.<sup>42</sup> With the decline in employment and income the togt representative who had been criticized for not reflecting the views of the workers on the Native Advisory Board became more active. Matonsi wrote to the municipality on 24 July 1931 putting forward the grievances of the workers and claiming that the Christian Africans on the Board were not representing the Point community. He stated that the main grievance was the low level of wages; the workers had pressed him to put forward their demands to the authorities.

We complain about wages. We are starving with our children. We are worried by taxation. We have so many taxes to pay. What is troubling us is to pay tax for our women, and dipping fees, dogs, and we are not doing anything useful with our dogs. We are also troubled by the Togg Badge in spite of all the taxation.<sup>43</sup>

The other complaint of the workers was that women at the barracks were being interfered with and had been arrested. Matonsi said that the limited number of days that wives were permitted to stay at the barracks was a particularly bad regulation and was the cause for complaint especially among sick men.

Although these were undoubtedly the grievances and demands of the togt workers, some of the issues being raised at the meeting with the municipality in June 1929, it seems as though they had only been put forward by Matonsi under pressure of the workers (as is implicitly acknowledged). It was possibly a last minute attempt to regain credibility among the workers as a meeting took place shortly after the demands were presented to the municipality which elected a new representative. The togt workers of Bell Street barracks substituted an open election for the appointment of a representative by the municipality to the Native Advisory Board and demonstrated their democratic talent. 'Candidates for representing interests of workers, A. Gumede and D. Mate, and after they were proposed, seconded and voted upon under the chairmanship of Mr. Ngiba, Dick Mate had 183 votes and A. Gumede had 168 votes. Therefore Mate is our representative in matters of the Barracks, Gumede is his assistant and deputy during Mate's absence, is the declaration of the community.'<sup>44</sup> This certainly was an indication of the rising militancy of the dock workers as Dick Mate was one of the workers who had addressed the meeting at Cartwright Flats on 16 June 1929, shortly before the mass picketing began.<sup>45</sup> Unwilling to accept the democratic choice of the workers, the Native Advisory Board asked for the matter to be investigated by the Native Welfare Officer who reported that the usual procedure was to call for nominations and then for the Department to appoint a representative decided by the officials, a quite undemocratic procedure. Matonsi may not have been removed as representative, but the principle of elected representatives was later established for togt workers. On 30 July 1933 the secretary of a meeting of workers at the Bell Street barracks reported to the Native Advisory

Board that Amos Gumede had been elected to represent the barracks. He was subsequently re-elected at a meeting on 27 July 1934.<sup>46</sup>

The togt workers had established themselves as a formidable political and industrial group during the post-war strikes, the struggle against the beer-halls, and the pass burning on Dingaan's Day 1930. Their concentration at the Point and their leadership of political and industrial resistance had welded them into a force which they described as a 'community'. The question was to what extent the SHWU could come to represent these workers and provide a strategy to link their industrial and political demands to the overthrow of the racially oppressive capitalist system. The SHWU worked with two main categories of workers in marine transport: stevedores, quayside workers, crane operators and coal loaders; and sea-going and coastal sailors. Reading an account of the work of the SHWU one gets the impression of more emphasis being placed on the organization of seamen than dockers, although details are provided on the conditions of work of dockers.<sup>47</sup> Having the support of S.M. Pettersen, a small ship-owner in Durban, and the opportunity of meetings at the Durban International Seamen's Club as well as on ocean-going steamers, the organization of seamen had considerable advantages over those of the dockers. But these advances must have also been extended to the dock workers as it was reported that in one month there had been eight meetings on ocean-going steamers in which several hundred workers had taken part.<sup>48</sup> This represents quite a considerable achievement for the union, but one which was not gained in Cape Town where the Communist Party encouraged workers to desert the Cape Town Stevedoring and Dock Workers Union to join the SHWU.<sup>49</sup>

### The struggle against intensified exploitation

In the struggle to raise the profitability of industry in South Africa during the depression, the capitalist state responded by attempting to cut transport costs and increase the turnover of capital. The burden of increased

exploitation in the interests of capital as a whole fell sharply on the dock and railway workers, both in the form of wage cuts and longer hours of work. During 1931 it was decided by the SARH to reduce black wages and overtime pay. While formerly overtime was paid after 'normal' hours of work each day, early in 1932 it was decided that it should not be paid until black workers had completed 60 hours a week.<sup>50</sup> By approaching the unilateral changes in conditions of service from the question of overtime, the General Manager blurred over the fact that the 'normal' hours of work were being extended from 48 to 60 and that the decline in wages per day was being enforced not only through direct wage cuts but also through expanding the working week. The wages of workers in Durban were first cut from 2s 6d to 2s and then again to 1s 7d a day from 1 April 1932, with an additional reduction in the food allowance. The wage cuts and longer working hours marked an enormous increase in the exploitation of the workers whose interests were sharply attacked with the aim of reducing the cost of transport to capital. With a greater latitude of action than employers in factories and mines, who were bound by legislation on hours of work, the SARH was able arbitrarily to intensify the exploitation of the workers. Its response to the crisis in profitability was to increase the rate of surplus labour, absolutely in contrast to other industries where short time was being worked. The intensity of labour, its productivity, and duration, were all simultaneously increased.

The workers could not remain passive under these conditions of rapidly deteriorating working standards. Even though the circumstances were hardly ideal any further tolerance for these attacks on living standards would allow a complete rout of the workers' position. In the resistance to the SARH's super-exploitation one of the most important workers' struggles against depression-borne attacks on living standards took place with workers coming out simultaneously on strike. The workers in Port Elizabeth and Durban struck against the final wage reduction<sup>implemented</sup> on 1 April 1932. In Port Elizabeth the strike was crushed by the Railway Administration splitting the

workers on racial lines. After the African jetty workers had gone on strike 'a couple of years ago' they had been displaced by Coloured workers who had in turn gone out on strike against the depression wage cuts. This strike was undermined in a classical tactic: the original African workers were re-employed to replace the 'scabs-turned-strikers'.<sup>51</sup> This ready reserve of qualified workers soon broke the thrust of the strike, although it was reported the authorities felt compelled to grant some overtime concessions.<sup>52</sup>

In Durban the strike broke out spontaneously on 2 April 1932, but soon received the support of the AFTU. It had been threatened for days before the new conditions were implemented as the workers refused to accept the 60 hour week. At two meetings addressed by the manager the workers totally rejected these conditions and reportedly received the support of White dock workers. The demands of the workers were for a 44 hour week, time and a half overtime, and for 3s a day. 'The bosses' Government are determined, in order to reduce costs to drive the Native proletariat to an unheard of mass misery and starvation,' argued Umsebenzi, which was published the day before the strike.<sup>53</sup> More than 1,000 workers resisted the increase in the working week from 48 to 60 hours a week.<sup>54</sup> With work at the port halted, a contingent of 10 Whites and 300 togt workers usually employed during labour shortages, was brought in as replacements. 'For the first time in the history of the Port of Durban', wrote The Star, 'white workers pushed barrows for 6s a day.'<sup>55</sup> Any concrete support from white workers evaporated, although solidarity from black workers was equally absent. The local bourgeois press was complacent that the immediately available reserve army of labour could maintain production; cargo handling merely being slowed down and strike-breaking protected by the police.<sup>56</sup> Reports from the workers' side claimed the strike was considerably more effective with the docks 'completely tied up for some days'. The togt workers who came in as strike-breakers were employed at 3s 6d a day as compared with the 1s 7d a day earned by the workers before the strike. 'Many dockers were deceived by this manoeuvre

and joined up as day-labourers, only to find their wages cut as soon as the strike was over.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the claim of the AFTU that the strike was conducted under its leadership after a spontaneous start, the struggle revealed that industrial organization was undeveloped. Despite earlier reports of workers joining a transport workers' group early in 1931, during the strike there was the first mention of an attempt to establish a Dockers' Union affiliated to the AFTU. Many active workers, it was reported, had joined. (The difficulties in setting up a union during a strike must have been immense; although it could work as a strike committee if there was widespread victimization, as occurred, it could become predominantly an employment agency.) The nucleus union formulated the demands of the workers and issued a strike bulletin published in Zulu, Sesotho and English. Despite this agitation and the beginnings of union organization, the strike was lost decisively. Commenting on the strike, which aroused the support of large numbers of African workers, Dube drew morbid and reformist conclusions and attacked the dockers' and Communist Party leadership. The strike was truly 'pathetic', had resulted in hundreds losing their jobs at a time of dire impoverishment in the reserves, and had increased black unemployment. The problem, he felt, was that the African workers 'do not have an advocate in the Government department'. The organization of the workers was not acknowledged by the state and the leaders had disappeared after the strike. 'It is ridiculous that these leaders of the people should not have tried some easier method rather than allowing workers to take such a drastic step.'<sup>58</sup> These views ignored the objective necessity of strike action as the most elementary form of workers' defence; it may have been badly timed, but how otherwise were the workers to resist? At about this time Dube was entering into an alliance with the Ngcobo faction of the ICU yase Natal to develop its relationship with the Natal Native Congress.<sup>59</sup> Whatever the intention of these political developments, they were certainly hostile to the Communist Party and could

have aimed at providing an alternative and 'responsible' dock organization.

The attempts by the Communist Party to organize the dock workers had not disappeared with the strike, however, even though the workers had lost the battle against the new conditions of work. Within the same month of the strike the AFTU issued a call for the national organization of dock and railway workers to include in particular Cape Town and East London where strikes had not taken place. A National Transport Workers Union was needed with branches in all seaports and railway centres which should be based on groups in the dock compounds, railway yards, and goods sheds and should aim at direct action. The scabbing by the immediate reserve army of labour (brought out by the obvious weakness of strike action) could be stopped. 'This can only be done by organizing the unemployed under the leadership of the AFTU and putting forward demands on their behalf.'<sup>60</sup> The emphasis on industrial demands and trade union organization marked a shift in the policy of the Communist Party from the general agitation in the form of demonstrations of the unemployed, international labour day rallies, and pass burning campaigns, associated with a perspective of a revolutionary upsurge, to the systematic development of partial demands as a basis for building the party.<sup>61</sup> The strikes of dock workers were seen as the starting point for a national dockers' and railway workers' strike as a counter-offensive against new attacks by the capitalist state. The strategy now was to build on the level of immediate resistance of the workers to the burden of the depression to develop a wider movement of political struggle against the racist state.

The industrial strategy of the Communist Party for seamen and harbour workers involved an unusual combination of issues: the assertion of the leadership of the party, joint demands for black and white workers (although different wage demands were made for each group), and an attempt to build a national, non-racial union.<sup>62</sup> By May 1932 it was announced that the

Seamen's and Harbour Workers Union had been formed as part of a campaign to build up the strength of the Communist Party in basic industries and among the unemployed. After two weeks of existence the SHWU claimed to have 100 members from white and coloured seamen and fishermen, railway and harbour, and dock workers. The main purpose of the union in terms of the overall strategy of the Communist Party was to build up party membership, and it was reported that 53 workers, mostly dockers, railway workers and unemployed, were recruited to the party through the union.<sup>63</sup> As the conditions of work deteriorated rapidly for all workers, the Communist Party issued calls for strike action on a national basis. In Cape Town there was a wage cut of 6d a day and the quarter day tickets were removed. In Mossel Bay stevedore wages were lowered from 5s to 4s a day for twelve hours' work. Later in the year the SARH ordered retirement of all black workers aged over 58 years, of those over 50 who were inefficient, and dismissal for those who refused to accept the wage cuts. These workers were to be replaced by white workers wherever possible as long as extra costs were not incurred.<sup>64</sup> This second wave of wage cuts and redundancies appeared to be a decisive blow against the workers and the possibility for building unity between black and white workers. The Communist Party still remained optimistic that the course of events could be reversed through strike action.

We lost our recent strike because we were unorganized and unprepared. But we are not defeated — we shall not give in. The next strike will be a gain for us. With renewed energy and determination prepare now for the coming struggle.<sup>65</sup>

Later in the year when even further drastic wage reductions had been made (to 1s for a 10 hour day in some areas) the party reported 'tremendous discontent' and the further development of party nuclei in the docks and ships. The SHWU appears to have been eclipsed by the party, which was claimed to have made decisive gains through taking up leadership of daily struggles of the workers, particularly in basic industries.

Putting forward the concrete demands of the workers as a basis for preparations for struggle, taking up the daily grievances and raising round them an agitation and linking it up with the general conditions of imperialist exploitation and slavery, the Party, through intensive work and concentration, succeeded in getting a fairly strong footing amongst the dockers and seamen and to a lesser extent amongst the railway workers.<sup>66</sup>

Repression by the authorities was said to be intense and much of the organizational work was done at night.

The gains the party made by using the SHWU primarily as a recruiting agency and claiming exclusive leadership of the workers' struggle, <sup>part of the ultra-militant strategy of the Comintern,</sup> were at the expense of unity among organized workers in the Cape Town docks. Having formed the SHWU to represent all dock workers: stevedores and quay railway workers, government and privately employed; the union ran both into the problem of the sectional divisions among the workers and the opposition of existing trade union leadership. Two trade unions for black dock workers were well established in Cape Town. The first, the Cape Town Stevedores and Dock Workers' Union had emerged as part of a break-away movement from the ICU in 1928. It had managed to secure registration in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 and by March 1929 had a membership of 304. The second, the Alfred Dock Waterside Workers' Union (ADWU) was formed by those workers employed by the SARH who were precluded by law from being members of a registered trade union. These harbour workers formed their own union which had a membership of 187 in the early 1930s.<sup>67</sup> As part of the strategy of placing the Communist Party in the position of exclusive leadership of the working class during the phase of ultra-militancy the workers were encouraged to desert the reformist CTSDWU and to join the SHWU, rather than build a faction within the union. There were certainly political differences between the leadership of the two unions which may have attracted some workers to the SHWU, but the majority preferred to remain loyal to the union they had built whatever its limits.<sup>68</sup>

The highest point in the Communist Party's campaign to secure a base within possibly the most advanced section of the African working class in its concentration, international contact, and consciousness, came in the program of action published in August 1932 calling for a national strike.<sup>69</sup> Despite its formal style (and the fact that it was not translated into Zulu and Xhosa), its single-minded party approach and its preoccupation with the danger of war against the USSR, it represented a considerable achievement in developing the fighting demands of the harbour workers. (See Appendix C.) Addressed to dockers, stevedores, lightermen, quay workers, and coal loaders, it presented the redundancies, short time, speeding up of work, and reduction in the number of workers in each gang, as the response of harbour employers to the capitalist crisis. Employment for harbour workers was being reduced to one or two days a week and was being further reduced by cargo being transferred to the lowest wage port, Durban, where work was tremendously speeded up. In Durban the exploitation of the workers was the most intense, with workers being expected to do extra work without pay on Saturdays to handle the cargo diverted from Cape Town.

The strategy and demands of the program of action reflected the perspective of an imminent revolutionary upsurge among the workers: committees of action were to be built in every port to prepare for strike action in support of the comprehensive demands of the party. The demands covered all aspects of harbour work, from minimum wages to manning levels. Against the earlier ambiguity of a minimum wage and percentage increases, the program of action substituted a demand for a minimum wage of 8s a day for all workers 'irrespective of race or colour'. It called for a guaranteed minimum wage of 32s a week, free railway transport, the abolition of overtime, and an end to dismissals. Three of the demands raised the question of workers' control in the docks: for a minimum of thirty workers per gang, the distribution of work tickets through elected committees of workers of all

ances, and the redistribution of cargo from Durban to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London. All these demands were made in the context of preparations for national strike action against the employers' offensive.

The SHWU had considerably greater potential in Durban where ships were being diverted away from the higher-wage Cape Town docks and where work was being speeded up to unprecedented levels. The great advantage of the SHWU as a national union was that it could coordinate resistance in all the docks to resist the shipping lines and stevedoring companies taking advantage of the 'weak link' in the line of defence of the harbour workers. But the Communist Party's support for the workers' struggle against the speed-up seems to have been more a response to the resistance of the Durban workers than a planned tactic. Despite the violence of the police attack during the pass burning of 1930 and the defeat of the strike of April 1932, the dock workers were remarkably resilient. An article in *Zulu* appearing under the name of the Durban dockworkers reflected the growing political awareness of the workers and their struggle against the rising level of exploitation. The workers drew the lesson from the shooting and imprisonment of the resisters that no freedom could be possible under the existing regime. They protested against the laws which governed the workers, 'especially we dock workers during these days when we are made to work as if we were a people without souls — as if we were a machine'. Those who were subjected to the despotic regime at the docks provided evidence of the tremendous speed-up, 'people are made to work as if they were made of steel'. On one day a group of 60-70 workers had set a new record in loading ships. On a normal working day (between 0720 and 1700) 38,000 bags of brown sugar weighing 210 lbs a bag had been loaded. The workers protested against this superexploitation and attacked the state. 'The government of thieves is one of fools, just how does it think that we could stop fighting back against such illtreatment.'<sup>70</sup>

Ironically, by routing cargo increasingly through Durban, the harbour employers strengthened the capacity of the workers to resist the speeded pace of work. Despite the presence of a massive reserve army of labour ready to take their jobs, the workers were able to devise new forms of struggle. In a significant development which ran counter to the call for national strike action (which could have made the strikers immediately vulnerable to displacement) the workers took to 'go slow' strikes against the tremendous speeding up of work. Early in 1933 two successful 'go slows' were coordinated through the SHWU in Durban. Two of the gangs united to slow down the movement of cargo through systematic delays in handling cargo in the holds and on the quays. 'As a result each gang now performs less than a third of the work it did previously without any reduction of pay.' The Communist Party saw the 'go slows' as the beginning of further 'mass actions' against miserable wages and slave driving methods of work instituted by the SARH, stevedore bosses, and the indunas, which made Durban a record breaking port in loading and discharging cargo; 'that is', it argued, 'for increased profits for the steamship companies, stevedore bosses and the SARH, accompanied by hellish speed up, more accidents, lower wages, dismissals, etc., for the workers.' The demands made by the party were somewhat moderated by the new tactics, with those for workers' control being dropped in favour of more defensive issues: for an eight hour day, 4s a day (instead of 8s), three hot meals, compensation for sickness, accidents, unemployment, and death, and against the forcible collection of taxes.<sup>71</sup> Workers were called upon not to pay the taxes imposed on them and mass strikes were urged in support of the demands.

Despite the encouraging development of sustained resistance to the worsening of conditions and speed up, nothing further is reported in Umsebenzi on the struggles of the dock workers or the SHWU until 1935 when the strategy of organizing the African working class in basic industries was not the immediate objective of the Communist Party. The serious decline in the industrial

work of the Communist Party was caused by factionalism within the African Federation of Trade Unions which had been reduced to the point of total collapse in 1932.<sup>72</sup> The party itself entered a period of bitter strife, as beset other Communist Parties, under the Comintern campaign of the time against the 'right wing danger'.<sup>73</sup> Considered as a whole, the Communist Party's intervention in agitation and organization in the docks, limited though it was to the least propitious time of organization (during the depression between 1930-32) showed the great possibility for national trade union and political organization among dock workers. After this short burst of activity, it seems as though the SHWU was allowed to disintegrate, and no attempt was made to revive it during the much easier opportunities for organization in the late 1930s and after. The strategy of transforming the defensive struggles of the dock workers during the depression, as attempted in other sectors, into a political offensive against the capitalist state was predicated on the imminent revolutionary upsurge forecast by the Comintern. This apocalyptic strategy raised many of the essential demands of the harbour workers, but failed to lay the foundations for the permanent organization of the African working class. The primary tactic advocated by the party, with increasing desperation, was that of strike action. But while workers had spontaneously resisted lengthened hours and wage cuts on 1 April 1932 in Durban and Port Elizabeth, the strikers had been defeated by the enormous reserve army of labour, black and white, available to replace them. The calls to strike action made subsequently by the Communist Party could have led to a disaster for the workers rather than a temporary defeat at a time when the SARH and stevedoring companies were purging the ranks of the workers to rid themselves of inefficient workers and militants. Under these conditions a revolutionary strategy should rather have been to have developed an underground trade union around militants deeply rooted in the compounds. Although some attempt was made early in 1930 to train cadres and build cells in production in Durban, this work does not seem to have been systematically developed and was not consistent with the publicity given to the strategy,

which could only have increased state repression. At times the Communist Party seemed more concerned with being seen to be carrying out an ultra-militant strategy than carefully building the foundations of trade unions under Marxist working class leadership. The ringing manifestoes and calls to action may have attracted advanced workers to the party, but they did not build the trade unions as organs of workers' democracy and sustained action during the vicious repression. Shortly before the SHWU dissolved it appeared that some of these issues were being recognized but not incorporated into new strategies; the 'go slows' were described as a new tactic but mass strikes even more urgently insisted upon. The weakness of the attempt to organize the dock workers was a refusal to acknowledge different levels of class consciousness and potential class action among the workers; if the Communist Party was self-consciously to lead the workers into action a trade union was scarcely necessary. But a trade union is a workers' organization fighting for the widest unity among workers, both 'backward' and 'advanced' party members and non-party workers. There is evidence that these arguments were being made by the workers: that strikes should be the product of workers' decisions to be led through the trade unions and not directly manufactured by the Communist Party.<sup>74</sup> By insisting that the trade unions should be duplicates of the party, the workers' organizations never took on flesh nor authenticity as the product of the workers' own activity.

The important secondary tactic was to prepare for strikes by mobilizing the reserve army of labour: those casually employed, the unemployed, and workers in similar jobs who could substitute for the strikers. One of the strengths of the Communist Party was that it was able to agitate on the broad issues of the crisis and direct the political energy of the unemployed against the capitalists. But this could not substitute for the most thorough trade union organization and tactics which would not result in mass dismissals and victimization. In reviewing the strike action undertaken by workers in this period, Nzula made the following assessment:

The strikes broke out spontaneously. No preparations were made. There were no strike committees, and the trade unions had no strike fund. Moreover, the strike movement was not linked to the movement of the unemployed.<sup>75</sup>

Even where agitation among unemployed could be undertaken in support of strike action this could not be sufficient to stop the starving unemployed taking the work of the strikers; new tactics had to be developed which did not put the strikers at the mercy of employers and the police. All the strikes undertaken in 1932 had ended in defeat, and the one tactic which held out promise for sustained resistance, the 'go slow', was not advocated widely, possibly because of its defensive nature.<sup>76</sup> In the absence of underground trade unions based on a large element of self-organization and intelligent tactics, the forward movement of the workers had to wait on the revival of the economy.

#### Rural impoverishment, capitalist growth, and strikes

The sharp decline in world trade and in industrial production in the advanced capitalist economies associated with the depression did not lead to a general collapse of the capitalist system. And in some ways the South African economy possessed certain advantages; particularly with the gold mining industry which was able to increase production and act as a generator of demand for the engineering and food industries, for example. Nevertheless, the decline in wage labour and worsening natural conditions (soil erosion and drought) placed the burden of the crisis heavily on the labour tenants, poor peasants, and migrant workers depending on cultivation in white areas or in the reserves for a proportion of their means of subsistence. Although the process of rural impoverishment grew unevenly with some areas sustaining a peasantry able to subsist independently of prolonged wage labour, there was a marked decrease in agricultural production and rural living standards generally. The Native Economic Commission reported on overstocking, soil erosion, and even desert conditions in many reserves where once good

grazing existed.<sup>77</sup> Wolpe, who made an important advance in relating the changing character of political domination of the African working people to the dissolution of pre-capitalist relations of production in the reserves, tends to emphasise the sharpening and intensification of impoverishment during the Second World War.<sup>78</sup> While this may be valid in terms of a generalized statement of the decline of the necessary means of subsistence in the reserves (and helps make a neat transition from segregation to apartheid) it fails to allow for both the particularly uneven levels of impoverishment by area and by ownership of the means of subsistence. The argument that rural impoverishment generates struggles about wages and all aspects of urban and rural life, as Wolpe maintains, both tends to reduce political changes directly to economic crises and concentrate attention on the reserves, whereas the specific gravity of political struggle has rested for decades in the towns. The 'lag' in economic struggles to compensate for the losses sustained by the African working class during the depression has to be explained both in terms of the slow growth in the economy and the deficiencies of class organization and strategy.

During the 1930s there is evidence of the advanced dissolution of the non-capitalist means of subsistence in the reserves as it is estimated that 59 per cent of all grain requirements of the population in the reserves were imported.<sup>79</sup> The impoverishment of African homesteads in the reserves increased drastically during droughts like that of 1936 with large populations completely dependent on the sale of food. For many migrant workers there was a sharp increase in the time they spent in wage labour and dependence on the cash economy. The political authorities capitalized on the increased poverty of the reserves to draw a lesson on the disciplining of the African working class. The Native Commissioner of Natal, A. S. Dunlop, in addressing a meeting of chiefs and headmen at Dundee early in 1936 said: 'The young men who are becoming more lazy and impudent every day, showing no respect to their elders, will have to work or starve.'<sup>80</sup> During what was

said to be the worst drought in the history of Northern Transvaal and Zululand about 50,000 cattle died and no crops were reaped for over a year. The state distributed maize to poverty-stricken Africans at between 14s to 17s 6d while diverting maize originally consigned to stock farmers as feed at 5s 6d a bag.<sup>81</sup>

The increased flow of workers into Durban alarmed the local bourgeoisie who feared that slums would be created. Although the editor of the Natal Mercury argued against mass deportations, favoured enlarging the reserves, and increasing wages to widen the internal market, it also felt that stricter controls were needed. 'The time is rapidly approaching when circumstances will compel the authorities to regulate the influx of Natives to the towns once the reserves are enlarged and their development taken in hand, and to bring under control and supervision the thousands of landless, detribalized Natives living in and around the urban areas amid appallingly insanitary and demoralizing conditions.' Strict police supervision was also necessary over the barracks which could easily become centres of 'vice and lawlessness'.<sup>82</sup> The views of the African petty bourgeoisie, expressed through the Combined Native Association, was that employers should pay their workers' rents and that suitable hostels should be erected with low rents.<sup>83</sup> Despite the various proposals for reform, the main thrust of the local state was towards control; the Native Affairs Committee proposed to employ a further 10 additional white inspectors and 10 African constables in the interests of 'more effective administration and general tightening up of the Native Registration Regulations'.<sup>84</sup> These proposals indicated the contradictory tendencies within the economic revival with a vast increase in the reserve army of labour, improved employment opportunities, and tighter urban control.

Despite the constant pressure of unemployed workers on their jobs and a fairly sluggish rise in world trade with South Africa (the tonnage of cargo landed in Durban only approached that of 1929 in 1936), the African harbour

workers took strike action to stop the supply of food to Italian troops in Ethiopia and in demanding wage increases. The dockers were angered by the invasion of Ethiopia by Italian troops and were readily responsive to propaganda put out by the Anti-Fascist League in Durban. The issue came to a head when the Perla called into Durban to take on 1,100 tons of frozen meat from Messrs. Federated South African Meat Industries on 27 August 1935. The police were called in by the contractors but a gang of 60 African stevedores who were to have loaded the beef refused and left the docks. Not leaving pickets behind under the gaze of the police, the workers left it open for other workers to be found, and by 1000 another gang was loading the beef at full pace.<sup>85</sup> African workers interviewed in the compounds by a Natal Mercury reporter were eager to take up arms against the Italians. 'If we can do anything to stop the White man treading down the Native in Abyssinia as he has done in other parts of the world, we will do it. It is the last Native kingdom and it must survive.'<sup>86</sup> Despite these views, the loading of the Perla continued the following day with frozen meat from Botswana and mules.

The action which had been taken spontaneously by the workers was reinforced by a special Ethiopian edition of Umsebenzi which appealed to all dockers to refuse to handle any goods for Italian East Africa. It called on all workers to support the boycott. 'If we, the workers of South Africa allow this food to be sent to East Africa, we shall be helping Mussolini to conquer and enslave the people of Abyssinia. Remember that it is your fellow Black Africans of Abyssinia upon whom Mussolini is making war. The independence of Africa's only remaining Black state must be dear to your hearts. You have it in your power to help your fellow Africans against the Italian imperialists.'<sup>87</sup> At a meeting of the CTSDWU in Cape Town on 31 August 1935 the workers decided to refuse to load the Italian ship Sabbia with meat. Mass meetings of thousands of people were held to demand the cancellation of contracts between South African companies and Italian shipping

lines to supply meat and provisions, and political action against Italy. The reformist leader of the Cape Federation of Labour Unions, R. Stuart, announced support of the Federation for the dockers 'by all the means in their power' and appealed to the public conscience of South Africa in defence of the dockers' action.<sup>88</sup> The boycott gained strength as the dockers refused to load any Italian ships regardless of their destination. General support came from the two main groupings of registered unions.

Although the Communist Party which led the 'Hands off Ethiopia' campaign had, with the decisive action of the dockers, gained a convincing victory in Cape Town, the Durban agents for Italian Lines, Messrs. J.T. Rennie, were confident the workers would not respond to the boycott call. The Sabbia was redirected to Durban to undergo repairs and unload cargo, and it seems as though supplies continued through this port.<sup>89</sup> This breach in the boycott movement seems to have been caused by two factors: the lack of persistent agitation by the Communist Party in the dock area and the massive reserve army of labour available to replace any activists. As one of the employers said: 'If the agitators try to dissuade the natives from working that will be no trouble, as native labour is abundant. I happen to know that if 1,000 natives walked off their jobs in the harbour area now we would have all the places filled before the evening.'<sup>90</sup> The strategy of the Communist Party in the previous period; to organize workers in basic industries as a means of building workers' resistance to the capitalist state, having been dropped in favour of broad anti-fascist alliances, the workers did not have the trade union organization to sustain their own boycott of Italian ships and gain the political and financial support of the rest of the labour movement. A popular Africanism was not sufficient to meet the organizational tasks of the moment.

In the absence of sustained agitation and a strategy of organization by the Communist Party, the anti-fascist struggle was taken up in a sectional

way by reformist trade union leadership. A mass meeting of 800 white Durban citizens held on 22 October passed unanimously a resolution to organize support for any workers 'in the event of their withholding their labour by refusing to manufacture or transport goods destined for Italian ports.'<sup>91</sup> Either as part of a combined strategy, or in response to this initiative, the Communist Party leadership of the 'Friends of Abyssinia' organized a mass rally of Africans the following evening. An enthusiastic audience of 1,000 gave an angry response when Eddie Roux mentioned the African labourers who had taken over the loading of meat when the regulars had refused. A resolution, 'That we African people of Durban sympathize with Abyssinia and pledge to support her to our fullest extent, and further, that we will support any action that the dock workers will take in order to send away the Italian ships empty from South Africa' was passed with cheers. A dummy of Mussolini dressed in a black shirt was set on fire and beaten with sticks.<sup>92</sup> The reports mentioned no call to action by the dock workers or general agitation in the harbour.

The leadership of the 'Friends of Abyssinia' were possibly aware that the Hertzog Government was seriously considering action against Italy. The need to mobilize the dock workers for industrial action fell away with the proclamation of sanctions against Italy to prohibit the export of arms, munitions, and implements of war, and forbidding the granting of financial credits to the Italian Government.<sup>93</sup> With this measure, which did not necessarily prohibit the export of meat, for example, it seems as though the agitation for industrial action was dropped in favour of general denunciations of Italian imperialism.

With the fall of Ethiopia came despair. But the 'Hands off Ethiopia' campaign had brought out the dangers of fascism and the links between fascism, war and colonial rule at a time when this was not yet apparent to all.<sup>94</sup>

This assessment is valid for the petty bourgeoisie (both black and white) drawn into political life through the campaign but does not reflect the temper of the

African workers who were prepared to take up arms in defence of Ethiopia. Unlike the campaign against rising food prices in 1919, in which the labour movement called on the dock workers of Cape Town to refuse to handle food exports, the 'Hands off Ethiopia' campaign did not seek to support the demands of the dock workers nor develop a national trade union so necessary to carrying the campaign forward.

With the gradual increase in trade with the world economy, there were better conditions for political struggle and strike action after the mid-1930s in Durban. African workers sought to make up the losses they had sustained during the depression and to resist the imposition of tighter police and administrative control. Their resistance did not meet with quite the same brutal suppression as during the depression because of a securer base for the ruling class in the government and differences among local property owners. The moderation of the bourgeoisie which reflected the improving rate of profit was matched by the mild and even servile character of resolutions adopted at a conference in an attempt to revive the ICU yase Natal.<sup>95</sup> The ambiguities in the form of class rule over the African working people in Durban was well illustrated in the question of the changeover from the Borough Police to the South African Police. The issue led to considerable controversy among the town councillors which stimulated the workers 'traditional' resistance to the police as the guardians of property relations. During 1935 there was a challenge to the government on the question of the South African Police by Councillor H.H. Kemp, who proposed that the Durban Corporation should not hand over the policing of the city to government control. The argument centred around who should receive the revenue from police action, in 1930 (possibly as a way of exacting a greater contribution from the municipality for the massive police raids) the South African Police had thrown the responsibility for non-serious crime on to the Borough Police and the municipality had lost revenue from bails and fines which were formerly paid into municipal funds.<sup>96</sup> After considerably controversy within the local corridors of power it was

agreed that the South African Police should take over all serious and non-serious crime on 1 April 1936, but it seems as though this was a difficult decision for the local Native Affairs Department to accept. The deployment of the Borough Police in making searches, checking passes, and attacking shebeens, had always been the prerogative of the Native Affairs Department, whose income the police guaranteed. Institutional loyalties were unsettled as well as the flow of revenue.

The installation of the South African Police (SAP) in Durban was part of the overall strategy of the ruling class to build the centralized repressive state apparatus particularly against the African working people. The central government had a general perspective on the need for uniform domination as opposed to the particular interests of local property owners and bureaucracies. In response to the resistance of African people in the reserves to tax collection, the African mobile tax squad had been reorganized and increased from 60 to 100 men and had 'a very wholesome effect' in gathering taxes despite severe drought and food shortages.<sup>97</sup> Well aware of the potential for suppression and control in the administrative re-arrangements of the police force, and the violence meted out by the SAP in the national raid of December 1929 and during the pass burning of 16 December 1930, resistance mounted among African workers in Durban along with fear. Frightened by rumours that the SAP pick-up vans would be used indiscriminately to take them to jail in a raid similar to that of December 1929, African workers flocked to the Native Affairs Department to pay their taxes. The Native Commissioner of Durban reported a phenomenal increase in general tax collected which exceeded the peak year of 1929 by £13,000.<sup>98</sup> On the day before the SAP took over there was an atmosphere of panic among Africans in town as well as a determination to resist. The reserve army of labour in Durban, swollen by the worst drought in Zululand's history and high prices for maize, anticipated mass arrests and deportations as during the depression.<sup>99</sup>

On the day of the changeover a crowd of about 2,000 collected at Victoria Street beerhall soon after 1530 to listen to radical African workers denounce the SAP. The town was alive with rumours: that free beer would be available to men who came to the beerhalls armed with two sticks, that the dockers were ready to smash any pick up vans sent to the Point, and that the beerhalls were to be occupied by Africans who would refuse to pay and then defy the SAP. The outgoing Borough Police made an unsuccessful attempt to break up the meeting and huge crowds lined Grey Street expectantly awaiting the arrival of the SAP. Pick up vans patrolling the area were stoned and the crowd booed and shouted insults at the police. Led by a Captain armed with a revolver, and advancing with fixed bayonets, the SAP eventually moved against a hostile crowd of about 20 Africans in the entrance of the beerhall, and in the ensuing battle two Africans were shot, one seriously wounded and several injured.<sup>100</sup> Bourgeois opinion was divided on the causes for mass resistance to the SAP, the Natal Advertiser describing the thousands of African who had prepared themselves for a trial of strength with the new police system as 'the definite and logical product of municipal mismanagement for many years past'. The 'lawless and criminal element' which had led the struggle were produced by inertia towards African housing as Durban had a night population of 10,000 above the total for which there was legal sleeping accommodation.<sup>101</sup> In this instance, the resistance of African workers to the oppressive police system produced a response of the urgency of reforms. The Communist Party responded by calling a mass meeting of Ikaka Labasebenzi (Workers' Shield) to protest against police terrorism in Durban. The speakers argued that the SAP were drawn from the most chauvinistic section of the white population and carried out the government's wishes in a 'brutal and terrible way'.<sup>102</sup>

As in the case of other demonstrations violently repressed by the police, those who suffered police attack were also charged with the crime of resistance. What was unusual about many of those arrested and charged is that

they were employees of the Native Affairs Department, and during their trial there were hints of evidence being withheld.<sup>103</sup> Of the 20 African labourers accused, 2 were found guilty of inciting to public violence and sentenced to two months' hard labour, 7 cautioned and discharged, and the remainder acquitted. The magistrate, T. J. Conway, concluded that the SAP had been the first to attack, had used unnecessary violence, and that the accused had been used as 'catpaws' by whites opposed to the SAP. Conway hinted darkly that there was more in the case than appeared on the record and that the Africans had been led to believe if they could chase the SAP out of Durban they would retire to Pretoria and never return. His sharpest comments were directed against the Native Affairs Department officials, particularly Layman, the Manager, who took no action in response to the rumour that free beer was to be supplied at the beerhalls. His attitude amounted to 'being almost criminal' and Conway implied that there had been agitation against the SAP in the Native Affairs Department.<sup>104</sup> He called for a full enquiry into the cause of the disturbances.

The Durban Corporation refused to give evidence, but the Commissioner, Major S.M. Page, exonerated the Native Affairs Department officials except the overseer of the Victoria Street Municipal Beerhall and his African induna. The hostility of the African workers to the SAP had arisen because of their knowledge of SAP violence on the Rand where the pick up vans were used as an instrument of oppression. Although not many Africans believed the rumour about free beer they all expected there to be an affray with the police.

It is improbable that this uneasiness and apprehension have been entirely allayed and that the stories of police brutality and abuse of the 'pick-up' vans are completely discredited, and it is consequently of the utmost importance that if the SAP in Durban is to gain the confidence of the better elements of the Native population the force must use the utmost circumspection in its dealings with them and see that its methods are characterised by scrupulous fairness and a wise consideration for their feelings.<sup>105</sup>

With this advice he sought to win over the African petty bourgeoisie from the general hostility of the African working people by a 'reformed' police force. The mass opposition to the SAP with the possibility that Durban could become a battlefield between African workers and the SAP must have influenced Page to urge the 'utmost tact' in dealing with African people.

#### Post-depression strikes and wage demands

The challenge issued to the SAP by the dock workers in threatening to smash any pick ups sent to the Point was an indication of the resilience of the togt and other harbour workers to the depression in trade. By 1936 there was a considerable revival in tonnage landed which continued into 1938, the largest increase being in fertilizers, machinery, hardware, cars, galvanized iron and steel, and timber.<sup>106</sup> The wider spread of commodities reflected a faster pace of growth in industry and construction which also helped to draw off some of the pressure of the reserve army of labour on the Durban docks. With better harvests in the reserves in 1937 the migrants entering the labour market were not under such compulsion to find work immediately, despite urban regulations, and all these factors improved the possibilities for class action by the employed: dockers, iron, chemical and timber workers.

In these improved conditions of class struggle the dock workers entered a phase of unparalleled activity, advancing principally wage demands and coming out on strike. Their strikes were planned and fought entirely on their own initiative and showed a high level of self-organization despite the lack of a dock workers' union. The first initiative of the workers was to regain the conditions they had lost during the depression. On 24 April 1937 about 500 togt workers struck, demanding a full day's pay for Saturday work. During the depression the employers had cut wages from 4s to 3s on Saturday after the workers had won a battle some years before to get the full day's rate. The bourgeois press claimed that work was not disorganized as it was a slack day and a number of monthly paid workers were brought in to continue work.

But in some cases the workers left after being warned off by pickets. The toggt workers mounted pickets at Point Road, in the dock area, and at the barracks, but were prevented from stopping the monthly employed by police patrols and a pick-up van, now an established part of police armoury. The workers had built up pressure for strike action by making demands for about a month and then staying away from work before the strike was instituted. Learning the lessons of survival during strike action, and hiding their leadership, the workers appointed no spokesman, but the stevedoring firms were in no doubt about the demand.<sup>107</sup> By noon the employers were compelled to concede the workers' demand. The fight of the Durban dockers was an inspiration to all African workers, reported Umsebenzi, and proof that united action and militant methods could win better conditions. 'That the stevedoring companies capitulated after a strike of only a few hours duration is due to the remarkable solidarity of the Native workers.' None of the toggt workers had scabbed and the record of the dock workers 'despite their poor state of organization is one to be proud of'. It drew the conclusion that the strike was a spur to all workers to strengthen their trade unions and win improvements, but made no commitment to support their demands and help develop a national trade union as in the past.<sup>108</sup>

This strike was followed some time later in the year by that of about 1,000 harbour workers employed by SARH who demanded that casual workers should be paid 4s instead of the present 3s. a day. During the depression their wage had been cut from 3s 6d to 3s a day and their demand was now to raise their wages to the level of the toggt workers employed by the stevedoring companies. After a deputation to the Port Goods Superintendent had proved unsuccessful the workers, with 'admirable solidarity' came out on strike on the morning of 12 August 1937. They refused to leave the compounds until the increase of 1s was granted, and despite the utmost persuasion of the SARH officials remained solid in their decision. The strike provided the SARH with a serious challenge as the harbour was exceptionally busy. Every berth was

occupied and every possible worker needed, and the SARH System Manager threatened to bring in strike-breakers by drafting African employees from other districts to the Point.<sup>109</sup> The strike immediately caused an unprecedented congestion in the harbour and slowed down the handling of cargo as the work had to be carried on by about 1,000 Africans who were permanently employed as wharf labourers. A large number of officials, led by T. J. Chester, manager of the Native Affairs Department, addressed the workers on the first day of the strike. He said the strike was 'unwise' as the question of increased wages had been referred to the SARH headquarters in Johannesburg for a decision. Their intransigence would cause more irritation than help as the question of wages of African workers was under discussion by a number of bodies in Durban. The strikers listened without comment to the officials but remained in the compound. The coal labourers at the Bluff, and railway tigt workers at Maydon Wharf, were not involved in the strike, but general cargo piled up on the quayside throughout the docks.<sup>110</sup>

The decisive action by the workers which received the approbrium of employers and officials won the respect of the registered trade unions in the local committee of the South African Trades and Labour Council. Even if the workers won the increase they were demanding they would still be getting less than the minimum wage in most industries in Durban, laid down by collective agreements signed by the Minister of Labour. It was time the Government applied the same rates to its own employees, the union officials argued.<sup>111</sup>

As the cargo piled up, the SARH carried out its threat to use employees from other departments and districts to clear the congestion. The bourgeois press reported that the work at the docks would not be seriously handicapped by the strike as about 500 workers were being drawn from large reserves of labour in the maintenance section and harbour construction works. But the press was careful to mention this was only a temporary measure and the tigt workers would not be replaced permanently. In the early days of the strike

the workers were addressed by the System Manager, J.S. von Willich, who said that the workers had taken up a 'fighting attitude' before negotiations were complete. They should return to work so that their representations could be considered. 'The strike is premature', he said. Chester, who interpreted for von Willich, was implicitly attacked by the strikers who said they would continue to make their representations direct to the SARH. He replied that if they considered he was out of place he would go. 'In that case we agree that you go', the workers responded in an increasingly militant mood. After the meeting one of the workers told the Natal Mercury reporter: 'We have enough money to go on with and we are not going back until we get our extra shilling.'<sup>112</sup>

The SARH responded to the increasing determination of the strikers by bringing in more strike-breakers and police. A large squad of police from the Rand arrived in Durban on 14 August as a 'precautionary measure' against the togt workers mounting pickets. By 15 August the number of strike-breakers from other departments was increased to 440 when 100 were drafted by train from the north and south coast and housed in railway barracks. These workers were insulated from the strike by being transported to their working places in trucks and protected by the police reinforcements brought in from the Rand. Special precautions were taken when the Warwick Castle was unloaded by strike-breakers with the police on hand with hoses to spray any pickets.<sup>113</sup> Although the SARH was able to build up the numbers of strike-breakers up to 500, the problem remained of clearing the congestion as the replacements were not as experienced as the togt workers. Sensitive to the possibility of mass pickets and criticism from the labour movement, the SARH stressed that the strike-breakers were permanent railway employees and not 'scabs' or 'labourers from outside', but their effect was the same.<sup>114</sup> By 16 August it was reported that the situation had improved for the SARH, although the congestion still remained and ships were still considerably delayed. At a meeting on 17 August between the Systems Manager and a deputation of

the strikers, the determination of the strikers was undiminished. The Native Commissioner, Arbuthnot, berated the workers: 'You people have taken the law into your own hands. When men take up that attitude they at once come up against a stone wall. You make things harder for yourselves.' He proposed that the workers return to work and await a reply to their demand, but after the deputation met the strikers their reply was: 'We have met the workers and they have discussed the suggestion. They expressed the opinion that it is not possible for them to go back on the present conditions, and that it would be better for them to seek other avenues of employment. Those who cannot will get home as best they can.'<sup>115</sup>

As the strike entered its eighth day a considerable police force had been gathered at the Point; 71 White and African railway police were housed under canvas. The white policemen had been drafted in from the Rand to supplement the African railway police (48 constables and 7 non-commissioned officers) concentrated in the area. The police paraded in the docks from 0500 and checked that the shifts of workers went on and came off duty at the correct time. There were continuous patrols in the docks and four parades a day, each lasting 2 to 3 hours. All in all, this amounted to a considerable display of force both to subdue any pickets and to dominate the dock area to snuff out any development of sympathy strikes.<sup>116</sup> The extensive use of strike-breakers was not having the intended results as some ships were forced to dock in pairs, and the congestion continued. Some of the railway togt workers got temporary employment with the stevedoring companies which were hard pressed at the rates of pay they were demanding from the SARH.<sup>117</sup>

With the unrelenting determination of the strikers and rising congestion, it was certain that the SARH would act decisively. The build up of the large police force at the Point created the conditions in which harsh measures could be taken without repercussions. On 20 August 1937 the togt strikers

were replaced by new permanently employed labourers who were to be increased by 30 to 40 a day until the required total was reached. On the first day 137 were taken on and four days later this was brought up to 245.<sup>118</sup> But even these additional workers brought in to augment those transferred from other departments were unable to deal with the congestion and some ships were unable to work at night because there was nowhere to put the cargo. Despite the determination of the SARH to bring the strike to a close it was only on 25 August that it could be announced that the strike was over. The turning point came when several hundred togt workers applied for work at the original daily basis of 3s a day and 320 were engaged. They returned to work at the original rate on condition that the SARH would consider their demand for 4s a day.<sup>119</sup> The strike had brought about a shift in the pattern of employment as the SARH had employed 232 permanents since the strike began at a wage of £2 a month, plus food and housing. Many of the togt workers who had been engaged by the stevedoring companies lost their work when the temporary rush caused by their strike was over. The end result of the strike on the SARH employment was to increase the number of jobs available.<sup>120</sup>

With the defeat of the railway togt workers through strike-breakers and large-scale police intervention, ironically, the result was not the docility of repression but further strike action by other togt harbour workers. Togt workers employed in unloading timber at Maydon Wharf, which was at the height of the timber season, struck on 28 August for higher wages. The strikers formed pickets armed with sticks who reportedly threatened any workers wanting to take their jobs. The police were rushed to Maydon Wharf and the pickets disarmed. Their employers told the workers that their demands would be considered after a conference of employers in Durban.<sup>121</sup> But the workers, who were employed by W.F. Johnstone and Company, came out on strike again on 30 August and demanded an immediate increase in their wages from 2s 6d to 3s 6d a day. The discharging of the timber was hampered as the work was done by monthly employed workers <sup>lacking experience in this work</sup> as a deputation of togt

workers met W.F. Johnstone. Their employer argued that no increases could be made until a collective decision could be made by all employers. The strikers replied they were not prepared to wait even after Johnstone promised to discuss their demands with other employers of African labour at Maydon Wharf and to present a reply in two days' time. In the face of this determination, the 300-400 strikers were paid off on 31 August and the registration fee which each worker had to pay on being employed by the firm was refunded.<sup>122</sup> The company decided that the permanent staff was adequate and that togt workers were not necessary to unload the one timber ship in the harbour. The wages of all workers employed by timber firms were increased by 6d a day on 1 September. The employers decided to give the wage increases firstly to the permanent employees who had remained loyal during the strike and not to engage any casuals even at the old rate of 2s 6d. It was reported that some 1,000 permanent workers were employed and at busy times the number of casual workers could rise also to 1,000.<sup>123</sup>

The sudden upsurge of strike action among dock workers in 1937 represented a tremendous advance for the African working class in Durban. Without having the advantage of contact with workers in other ports and industries, housed in barracks under the control of their employers and the municipal bureaucracy, and employed as casual migrant workers, the togt workers were able on their own initiative to organize strikes and raise pickets. In the case of the railway togt workers the strike was sustained for 14 days without strike funds or trade union organization against a state corporation commanding its own police force and able to shift monthly workers to act as strike-breakers from other departments. These were considerably achievements but also raise the possibilities if support had been coming from the Communist Party on the scale of its commitment during the depression. The article describing the railway workers' strike in Umsebenzi mentioned the difficulty of approaching the workers in the municipal compounds as the reason for the dockers being unorganized. It also stressed that because working conditions were disgrace-

ful and the workers militant, organization should be started. 'Any lasting gain . . . is impossible until dock workers are organized. For though a concession may be won here and there, these will only be temporary until the labourers are combined on a firm basis.'<sup>124</sup> These were truisms, but begged the question of what strategy could be adopted. If it were possible to make some organizational advance and develop the fighting demands of the workers during the worst imaginable time of the depression, surely more could have been expected during a time of economic growth and considerable self-activity among the workers?

The wage demands of the workers were essentially defensive when compared to the demands for over 100 per cent increases made in 1919 and 1920 and aimed at either restoring wages to their pre-depression rates or making modest advances. Yet even these moderate demands provoked tremendous resistance from the employers. In the case of the railway togt workers their wage demand, if met, would have only raised the SARH wage bill by about £300 a week and possibly even less but this demand was not to be met.<sup>125</sup> The challenge to the uniformly low wages for African workers by even a demand for 6d a day, which threatened to push wages upwards and break down traditional differentials (for instance between stevedores and dockers), was strongly resisted, all employers agreeing to hold the line against having to make any wage increases under pressure from the workers. No significant dent in the united front of the employers was possible in the battle of sections of the dock workers against their employers, even if the strikes could be sustained. The deadlock between the railway togt workers and their employers, for instance, could only be resolved in favour of the workers with the support of the stevedores and other dock workers. This level of coordinated action would only be possible with trade union organization to unite the workers and command the support of other organized workers.

### Strike movement and wage determination

Although in the preceding section we have concentrated on the strikes of dock workers as the most dynamic element in the African working class in Durban, there were a number of strikes by workers in other industries which impelled wide discussion on the need for intervention by the Wage Board to set a minimum wage. The Department of Labour drew attention to the debate on African wages in employer organizations and the Native Representative Council which had been caused by the awakening of the black unskilled workers 'after a period of quiescence following the abortive Native trade union movement of a few years ago'. The workers were putting forward their demands and again organizing, particularly in Durban which was the main centre of strike activity in the country.<sup>126</sup> In response to the general agitation and strikes for higher wages the leadership of the African petty bourgeoisie, which had been so bitterly disunited during the height of the strength of the ICU, took up the workers' demands in a constitutional manner. This approach was made possible both by the softening of attitude towards a controlled increase in African wages by employers' organizations which were conscious of the need to expand the internal market, and by the space left open by the Communist Party's lack of interest in developing the fighting demands of the African working class during the turn to the Popular Front. These representations secured neither substantial wage increases nor an unskilled wage determination as hoped, but confirmed the centrality of the demands of the African working class for a political leadership uneasy with the independent movement of the workers.

While the leading force within the strike movement was the togt workers, there were a number of other strikes which not only broadened the base for the economic demands of the workers, but also pointed to a possible merging of the organization and action of African and Indian workers. The strike at Falkirk iron foundry was particularly important in opening the possibility for new forms of working class action cutting across existing divisions

among black workers. Led by the unregistered Natal Iron and Steelworkers' Union, representing both Indian and African workers (housed in a compound) whose leadership was connected to the Communist Party, the strike united struggles previously conducted on the basis of existing racial divisions in the working class.<sup>127</sup> The bringing together of workers in production imposed by capital was being met by trade unionism reflecting these advances, a prospect not necessarily endorsed by the African petty bourgeoisie. None of the other strikes which took place in the docks, railways, fishing, African Explosives and Industries, textile, boxmaking, and soap industries, raised the question of working class unity and organization to the same level.<sup>128</sup>

The ferment in the African working class and the possibility of African workers uniting with other sections of the working class in independent action and organization caused anxiety to those who laid historic claims to represent the African people as a whole. As the pace of strike action grew, particularly in Durban, the African petty bourgeois leadership, so bitterly antagonistic in earlier years, united in presenting themselves as intermediaries in the struggle between workers and their employers. A meeting of African workers convened by A.W.G. Champion attracted 1,000 and agreed to send a deputation of Dr. J.L. Dube, of the Natal Native Congress, and his former enemy, A.W.G. Champion, and those they agreed to coopt, to place the demand for increased wages before employers and the authorities.<sup>129</sup>

Deputations followed to a conference of the municipality, Durban Chamber of Commerce, Natal Chamber of Industries, and the Durban Rotary Club, and in the following days to the Native Commissioner.<sup>130</sup> The deputation's request for an unspecified wage increase and the continuing strikes caused considerable debate among employers who differed in their evaluation of the seriousness of the support for the wage increases among African workers.<sup>131</sup> A number of meetings were held to build a common front among employers and the authorities in the face of strikes and deputations

for higher wages. Differences emerged between those who favoured a national minimum wage (the Durban Chamber of Commerce), those who felt the main issue was evening out wage differences between African workers in different industries, and those who argued that each industry should establish its own level of unskilled wage.<sup>132</sup> The Durban Chamber of Commerce recommended to its members to pay labourers £3 10s a month (of which 5s would cover accommodation and 15s food if provided by employers) and daily labour 3s 6d.<sup>133</sup> Even if this wage were paid by all employers of togt labour it would not necessarily have brought any wage increase to the harbour workers as the stevedoring workers were at that time earning 4s a day. The struggle of the more vulnerable section of employers to lay down a specific set of wages only served to sharpen the demands of the workers. A mass meeting of African workers in September 1937 called for a minimum wage of 5s a day, thanked the Chamber of Commerce for accepting the principle of a minimum wage, rejected rations as part of the wage, and opposed servants' uniforms as the dress of subordination.<sup>134</sup> The meeting, which also appealed to the Minister of Labour to appoint a commission into the question of a minimum wage in Durban, reflected the domination of the wage campaign by the African petty bourgeoisie; clear fighting demands being mixed with conciliatory and even wishful gestures.

As the tide of strike action receded, the appeals for a minimum wage met with less enthusiasm from the workers and less concern from employers. Without a strategy of fighting for the adoption of the minimum wage by all employers, the 5s a day wage demand did not gain currency among the workers. While turning towards the working class during the late 1930s, the African petty bourgeoisie was unable to bring any form of persistent political or economic agitation to the workers. The unity of the African petty bourgeoisie around the wage issue masked their inability to either revive trade union organization among African workers or play a successful interceding role between workers and employers. It would only be after further independent

initiatives were taken by African workers that the question of a general increase in labourers' wages would be raised again.

One of the most outstanding features of the whole period was the attempt of the Communist Party to organize a national dockers' and seamen's union. As part of a strategy of organizing workers in basic industries it marked the first attempt to organize the strategically placed harbour workers on a systematic basis, and in its conception it was sound. The reasons for its failure were related to the overall conception of the period, one of imminent revolutionary upsurge and the collapse of capitalist society. The SHWU was not designed to struggle and survive during the fierce repression and economic setbacks of the depression; the possibility of capitalist re-stabilization after the depression was not thought possible. The world-wide depression gave notice, however, that there was not a uniform relationship between economic crises and political action by the working class. The unprecedentedly high level of resistance of African workers in Durban during the late 1920s could not be sustained indefinitely; thought had also to be given to the need for underground working class organization. Even after severe reverses in the harbour it does not seem that the potential for working class resistance had been exhausted, as the workers searched for new techniques of struggle which would make possible protracted resistance. With the turn towards the People's Front by the Communist Party, to unite 'rank and file Afrikaners and the discontented middle class as well as the Labour Party' and the black oppressed in an anti-imperialist alliance, the organization of African workers in basic industries received a low priority.<sup>135</sup>

These turns and changes in Communist Party policy created an anomalous position for both the political and industrial organization of the harbour workers. From making an all-out effort to organize a national union around fighting demands during the worst possible time, trade union organization was non-existent both during the Ethiopian campaign in 1935, and as importantly during the revival of autonomous working class action in 1937. It is pos-

sible that these episodic attempts at mobilization and organization strengthened the tendency for togt workers to organize on the basis of a fierce independence and reliance on leadership by their fellow workers.

Although trade union organization was not sustained throughout the period from the beerhall picketing to the 1937 strikes, there is considerable evidence of 'internal' leadership among the workers operating as a collective intelligence. Despite the casual nature of their employment, the rotation of workers in the migrant labour system, and the force of repression, the togt workers showed themselves both capable of independent thought and action and conscious of their exploitation. Demands were made for pre-depression conditions of service to be restored, and strikes were led and fought without the support of other organized workers. Without an external stimulus, the workers were able to make up their losses and prepare for a period when the working class could move on to the offensive.

## Notes to Chapter 4

1. Cape Times, 7 January 1930, quoted in Walshe (1970): 146.
2. This strategy followed logically from the adoption of the 'Black Republic' resolution by the Comintern in 1928 which was the most advanced statement on the question of national liberation by working class or African political organizations.
3. The full complexities of the 'ultra-left' period in the Communist International and its effects on the South African party cannot be developed here but saying that the insistence on organizing the workers in production and on underground organization was a distinct advance on the general mobilization of African workers through the ICU. The tactical and strategical advances which were made in this period were, however, obscured by the rigorous two stage theory advanced and other peculiarities. These advances were, moreover, lost during the Popular Front period which followed during which the South African Party associated with segregated 'anti-fascist' groups and abandoned the Black Republic slogan. For a discussion of the issues of the time and the Comintern directives from the perspective of a leading official see Simons (1969): 438-442.
4. Roux (1948): 230.
5. Natal Mercury, 11 July 1929.
6. The Communist Party office was located at the corner of Hospital and Shepstone Streets which was close to the dock area. It was repeatedly raided towards the end of 1930 which seems to be the time when the dockers' union was initiated. Umsebenzi, 28 November 1930.
7. Roux (1948): 254.
8. Elsewhere there had not been the same 'preparation' for the pass-burning and general strike campaign even though there was a radical shift within sections of African political leadership and in certain communities (e.g. Bloemfontein). Roux (1948): 252-3. The danger in taking upon itself the leadership of the national liberation struggle was that the Communist Party could fail in its campaigns and become discredited in the eyes of the working class as a whole.
9. Durban Native Riots, File 57/323/1, Durban Municipality.
10. A possible explanation could have been the enthusiasm of the workers to deal deadly blows against their oppressors amplifying the direction of the struggle laid down by Nkosi. The only other explanation could be that the authorities permitted this ferment in the Smuts' tradition — to let things develop — before wreaking a devastating blow against the militant leadership.

11. Durban Native Riots, File 57/323/1, Durban Municipality.
12. Native Welfare Officer to Town Clerk, 21 November 1930. File 63/467/1, Durban Municipality: Native Affairs in the Borough.
13. Minutes of Native Advisory Board, 11 December 1930. File 57/323A/2, Durban Municipality.
14. Native Welfare Officer report to the Native Affairs Committee, 16 January 1931. File 57/323/1, Durban Municipality. Durban Native Riots.
15. Arnold specialized in the repression of African industrial and political movements. His nickname 'Tshaka' gives some insight into the consciousness of African workers in relation to Zulu absolutism and expressed no reverence for this past.
16. Natal Mercury, 17 December 1931.
17. Ilanga lase Natal, 19 December 1930. It is not clear whether Dube is referring to speakers on the platform or the rumours circulating in the gathering.
18. Roux (1948): 256.
19. Ibid.: 257.
20. Ilanga lase Natal, 19 December 1930.
21. Roux (1948): 257-262. Roux was sentenced to imprisonment in February 1932 for two months' hard labour after defying an order banishing him from Durban. Simons (1969): 459.
22. The International Negro Workers' Review, February 1931, 1(2): 14-15.
23. The union was later termed the 'Seamen and Harbour Workers' Union'. Umsebenzi, 20 August 1932.
24. Umsebenzi, 2 October 1931.
25. Roux (1948): 261.
26. 'We must have arms. It is no use being killed without weapons'. These were the conclusions reported by A. Moju who approached the workers after completing a jail sentence. Simons (1969): 446. The revolutionary conclusion that the racist and class oppressive state had to be resisted and overthrown through armed insurrection preceded the inception of armed struggle by underground resistance organizations by thirty years.
27. Palmer (1930): 122.
28. These conclusions are derived from a study of the figures on African employment in the annual Mayor's Minutes of Durban.

29. Natal Mercury, 2 April and 8 April 1931.
30. Smith (1945): Table XLIX.
31. Umteteli wa Bantu, quoted by Nzula et al. (1979): 99.
32. Natal Mercury, 6 April 1931. Proposals such as these which have emanated from liberal opinion have often passed into the armoury of the state; the Riekerk Commission seems to adopt similar positions. The idea that the capitalist state would regulate influx control to raise the level of wages of urban workers is, of course, ridiculous; whole industries and services in the cities are run by migrants recruited from the country areas and accommodated in barracks as provided for in the national labour bureaux.
33. Ilanga lase Natal, 12 February 1932, and Mayor's Minutes of respective years.
34. African workers from Natal and Zululand employed on the Transvaal gold and coal mines increased sharply between 1930 and 1931. van der Horst (1971): 216-7.
35. Mayor's Minute, 1932, p.6, and Smith (1945): Table XXIV.
36. An article in Inprecorr, the organ of the Comintern, which was probably written by Roux and appeared on 6 December 1929 (pp. 1446-7) describes the increased taxation and a revolt in the reserves of Natal early in 1928. Similar uprisings are described in Sik (1966) Volume II, p.161, but in neither case are the original sources specified. An examination of the Natal Mercury during this period did not lead to any further concrete details, although the Natal Witness which carries better reportage of rural affairs may have been more rewarding. Whatever the exact nature of the uprisings, there was undoubtedly keen resistance to the poll tax and provincial taxes.
37. Section 12(1)(d), Act 21 of 1923, as inserted by Section 7, Act 25 of 1930.
38. Ndaba zamaKomanisi eTekwini (Durban Communist News), 2, 19 April 1931. The quotations are from an official translation, Durban Native Riots, 57/323, Durban Municipality.
39. Ilanga lase Natal, 1 January 1932.
40. These reflections were made when collaborating with Soviet scholars in producing The Working Class Movement and Forced Labour in Negro Africa. Nzula et al. (1979): 130-137.
41. Nzula et al. (1979): 131.
42. South African Statistics, 1976: 17.4. The overseas and coastwise cargo figures have been added together. Nzula et al. (1979): 133, mention that the crisis in shipping led to massive unemployment and the introduction of short time for all workers.

43. Petition, 24 July 1931. File 56/315E/1, Municipal records: Native Wages and Rations.
44. Native Advisory Board, 26 July 1931, File 57/323A/2, Municipal records.
45. Natal Mercury, 10 July 1929.
46. Native Advisory Board, File 57/323A/3, Municipal records.
47. Nzula et al. (1979): 133. Nzula often drops the word 'harbour workers' from his discussion of the "seamen's union".
48. Ibid.
49. Umsebenzi, 20 August 1932, quoted in Budlender (1976): 29.
50. The detailed changes in conditions of service are contained in the Report of the General Manager of the Railways and Harbours for 1932; UG 39, 1932. This report naturally glosses over the wage cut which was implicit in extending hours.
51. Natal Mercury, 4 April 1932.
52. Umsebenzi, 14 April 1932. This concession is possibly the 'modification' to the harsh new regulations mentioned by the General Manager of the SARH — that workers required to work more than 10 hours a day on any weekday, Monday to Friday, would receive overtime payment. UG 39, 1932.
53. Umsebenzi, 1 April 1932. White worker support for the demands of the African workers is not specified either as support from co-workers or by their union.
54. The Natal Mercury estimated there were 1,000 strikers and Umsebenzi 1,500. Rather surprisingly, Umsebenzi only mentions the longer hours 'without increase in pay' and the wage cuts are not referred to.
55. Nzula et al. (1979): 151, quote The Star without giving the date of publication.
56. Natal Mercury, 4 April 1932.
57. Umsebenzi, 14 April 1932.
58. Ilanga lase Natal, 8 April 1932.
59. From a letter appearing in Ilanga lase Natal it appears as though Dube was trying to integrate the ICU yase Natal with the national ICU. The letter was written by A. S. Gumede who could have been the togt leader elected to the Native Advisory Board. Ilanga lase Natal, 22 April 1932.
60. Umsebenzi, 29 April 1932.

61. Simons (1969): 444 and 453 present these strategies as reflecting the personal style of leadership of Wolton and Dennis, but the issue seems to be much more complex, reflecting the disasters of the period of 'ultra-militancy', the isolation of the Communist Party from strikes in defence against the burden of the depression, and shifts within the policy of the Comintern. Nzula et al. (1979): 150 describe the AFTU as having played no active part or giving the workers any real help in a number of industries where it had influence.
62. The full set of demands were:
- Forward under the fighting leadership of the Communist Party and AFTU
  - Down with the increased hours (48 to 60)
  - Down with the wage reductions and short time!
  - For a 44 hour week
  - For 3s a day minimum for Native workers and a ten per cent increase for all workers
  - For 6d per hour overtime
  - For a National Union of Dock and Railway Workers uniting Native, Coloured and European
- Umsebenzi, 29 April 1932.
63. Umsebenzi, 27 May 1932.
64. The Star, 11 August 1932, quoted in Simons (1969): 455
65. Umsebenzi, 10 June 1932.
66. *Ibid.*: 22 October 1932
67. Budlender (1976): 25-26. One of the key issues in seeking registration for the CTSDWU must have been the possibility of registering an agreement with the employers. Because of anomalies in pass legislation (in which Cape African people were not required to bear passes), African workers in the docks could become full members of a registered union.
68. Budlender (1976): 29. The reformist leadership of the CTSDWU proved to be true to its members when the Communist Party swung to the right during the Popular Front period and proposed a two-tier minimum wage for black and white in 1937 at the South African Trades and Labour Council. Its representative, H.W. October, objected to this racism and opportunism: 'It does not matter whether a worker is Black or White, he should get that to which he is entitled.' While the Communist Party leadership proposed a minimum wage of 5s a day for Africans, his members were demanding a minimum of 12s a day. Simons (1969): 515.
69. Similar programs of action calling for strikes were drawn up for the garment and mine workers. See Umsebenzi, 20 August 1932, and 14 April 1933 respectively. The appeal to the dock workers was published in the issue of 20 August 1932.

70. Umsebenzi, 5 November 1932. Article translated for the writer by Bekisana Nkasana who at the time was employed by the Institute of Industrial Education.
71. Umsebenzi, 20 January 1933.
72. The observation of Huiswood, 1932, The tasks of the revolutionary trade union movement in South Africa, quoted in Simons (1969): 457.
73. The twists and turns of Communist Party policy between 1930-1936 are dealt with in Simons (1969), chapters 19 and 20. This is a useful but deficient account as it presents the various 'ultra-left' and 'right wing' policies as reflections of the personal leadership of the party, and fails to present the veering course of policy of the Comintern itself which was carried out by Comintern representatives in South Africa. The political battles were concluded with the execution of two 'ultra-left' members of the Political Bureau in Moscow and the inauguration of a People's Front in South Africa. Simons (1969): 477.
74. These criticisms were made by Moses Kotane of Bach's leadership in the 1930s and reflected the lack of support given to the AFTU by the workers. Bunting (1975): 135; see also Nzula et al. (1979): 132.
75. Nzula et al. (1979): 154.
76. Ibid.
77. Report of the Native Economic Commission, UG 22, 1932: paras. 72 and 73.
78. Wolpe (1972): 445.
79. Calculation by the writer in unpublished manuscript written with Martin Legassick, Is there a peasantry in South Africa?
80. Cape Times, 6 January 1936.
81. Cape Argus, 9 and 11 January 1936, and Umsebenzi, 25 January 1936.
82. Natal Mercury, 5 September 1935.
83. Natal Advertiser, 30 August 1935.
84. Natal Mercury, 28 August 1935.
85. Natal Advertiser, 27 August 1935.
86. Natal Mercury, 28 August 1935.
87. Quoted in Natal Mercury, 5 September 1935. The general tone and use of the second person indicates the distance travelled by the Communist Party from the statements to dock workers in 1932, as it entered the 'People's Front' period.

88. Natal Mercury, 2 September 1935.
89. Ibid. 3 September 1935. Between 3 September and 22 October 1935 there was a lull in agitation in Durban for reasons which are not clear.
90. Natal Advertiser, 2 September 1935.
91. Natal Mercury, 23 October 1935.
92. Ibid., 24 October 1935.
93. Government Gazette Extraordinary, 31 October 1935.
94. Budlender (1976): 29.
95. Umsebenzi, 5 anuary 1935.
96. Natal Mercury, 26 October 1935.
97. Report of the Department of Native Affairs 1935-36, UG 41, 1937: p.75.
98. Ibid.
99. Natal Advertiser, 1 April 1936.
100. Natal Mercury, 2 April 1936.
101. It concluded that 'white Durban' was chiefly to blame for the agitation against the police. Natal Advertiser, 2 April 1936.
102. Umsebenzi, 11 April 1936.
103. The municipality published a full record of the evidence to court, but not the magistrate's judgment. Record of Native Beer Hall Riot Case, 1 April 1936.
104. Natal Mercury, 16 May 1936.
105. Ibid., 7 August 1936.
106. Report of the General Manager of the Railways and Harbours for the year ended 31 March 1938. UG 40, 1938: 135.
107. Natal Mercury, 26 April 1937.
108. Umsebenzi, 8 May 1937. The article reported that the workers had twice refused to load Italian ships with frozen meat 'but unfortunately they did not receive the support they should have'.
109. South African Worker, 21 August 1937.
110. Natal Mercury, 13 August 1937.
111. Ibid.

112. Natal Mercury, 14 August 1937. Von Willich complained that the SARH could not talk to the workers while a pistol was held at their head.
113. Natal Mercury, 14 and 16 August 1937.
114. Ibid.
115. do.: 18 August 1937.
116. Daily News, 19 August 1937.
117. Natal Mercury, 19 August 1937.
118. Ibid., 21 and 25 August 1937.
119. A deputation of workers met Arbutnot on 24 August to ask whether the SARH would still adhere to the offer previously made if they returned to work. After some discussion the railway authorities agreed to employ as many toggt workers as there was work on the understanding that the workers would accept the old rates and wait for a response from headquarters. Natal Mercury, 26 August 1937.
120. Natal Mercury, 26 and 27 August 1937.
121. Daily News, 28 and 30 August 1937.
122. Natal Mercury, 1 September 1937.
123. Ibid., 2 September 1937.
124. South African Worker, 21 August 1937.
125. Calculating on the basis of 4 days worked per week, a 6d increase for 600 workers would amount to £288.
126. Annual Report of Department of Labour for 1937, UG 30, 1938: 3.
127. The struggle to sustain this unregistered union, which could have posed a new direction to the labour movement, was ultimately unsuccessful. Although the precise reasons for its dissolution are not clear, the union was eventually reconstituted to get recognition in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act; African members were either dropped or placed in a parallel union. See Ginwala (1974): 397. For a description of the strikes see Natal Mercury, 4, 26, 28, and 29 May 1937.
128. See Department of Labour Report, 1937, and Natal Mercury, 24 August and 8 September 1937.
129. Natal Mercury, 10 August 1937. L.R. Mapumulo, Secretary of the Catholic African Union, another former antagonist of Champion, seconded the resolution adopted by the meeting.
130. Daily News, 20, 21 and 23 August 1937.

131. Natal Mercury, 4 September 1937.
132. See Daily News, 31 August 1937; Natal Mercury, 15, 18 and 22 September 1937; and Daily News, 29 September 1937.
133. Natal Mercury, 18 September 1937.
134. Daily News, 29 September 1937.
135. CPSA, 1936, Organize a People's Front in South Africa: 10 and 19.

## CHAPTER 5

### Class struggles and decasualization

The Bantu of today regard it as normal procedure to spend the greater part of their working lives outside the Reserves in European employment. They adopt this mode of existence without reservation, as being in the natural course of events.

Tomlinson Commission UG 61, 1955: p.73

Controller of Industrial Manpower to leaders of dock workers: 'If you do not wish to work for less than 8s a day, then, of course, you must go home and other people will come and do the work.' Zulu Phungula, spokesman for dock workers: 'The Government must show us where to go because our homes are here in Durban.'

Department of Labour, File 1497, Minutes of meeting 11 March 1942

While there has been a comparatively large literature on African migrant workers engaged in wage labour but dependent on some supplement to household income from the reserves, very little has been written on the state of consciousness of these workers, their forms of organization, and the struggles they have conducted. Anthropologists have been pre-occupied with concepts such as 'detrribalization', 'urbanization', and cultural change, rather than attempting to understand the forms of working class action in the cities. In defence of the rights of African people to live in urban areas liberal social scientists (such as Mabel Palmer) have conceived of migrant workers as institutionalized undercutters of wages and have even endorsed a tightened pass system.<sup>1</sup> Others who have written on the class struggles of workers in South Africa consider that repression and enforced labour migration have seriously retarded the consciousness of the African working class as a whole.<sup>2</sup> The contradictory features of migrant labour: the prevention of a stabilized and permanent proletariat, but also the widespread experience of wage labour on mines, plantations, railways, and factories, and the spread of political ideas have been insufficiently developed. Migrant workers, it has been historically shown, also join trade unions, take part in strikes, become members of political parties, and take part in political demonstrations. Woddis develops this theme in part and concentrates on the knowledge and experience which is taken back to the rural areas by migrant workers.

In the busy market-of-ideas of the urban centres they have become new men, with enlarged horizons and an awareness of class interests and class solidarity, and a new national consciousness ... The migrant worker is also a migrant peasant, and the African worker-peasant with knowledge of both worlds, is able to bring to the countryside the spirit and political consciousness that has grown in the towns.<sup>3</sup>

This argument is an advance on the pessimism of those who can only see the urban African working class as threatened by migrant workers, but it re-orientes attention away from the cities to the countryside, to changes in the

peasantry rather than the development of working class struggles and consciousness. As an assessment of migrant workers' consciousness it poses the question of the degree of their proletarianization, of the structure of the African working class, and the forms of action which are taken by workers who are forced to maintain their families in the rural areas through being denied urban residence through low wages and the operation of influx control. The answers to these questions, and particularly the contribution made by migrant workers to the pace of struggle of the African working class, will be sought in the conditions and resistance of the togt dock workers.

During the Second World War there were particularly favourable conditions for resistance to capital by the African working class. As the war economy accelerated the rate of production new areas of employment were created for African workers, during a time when there was a decline in recruitment from neighbouring territories. The ability of capital to replace strikers immediately with fresh recruits was considerably diminished. On the political front the ruling class was compelled to make some forms of accommodation with the African working class in the easing of the pass laws and even in considering whether African soldiers should be trained in the use of arms.<sup>4</sup> Colonel Deneys Reitz, Minister of Native Affairs, declared that segregation had failed, that inroads should be made on the colour bar, and that the pass laws were iniquitous and had to be abolished as soon as possible. This statement was accompanied by an announcement of an almost complete relaxation of the pass laws in the large urban areas which lasted for several months in 1942. During this period orders were given to the police that passes were to be demanded only if Africans were arrested in connection with offences other than pass laws.<sup>5</sup> The Smit Committee, which investigated the conditions of African people in the urban areas, paved the way for these concessions and recommended that Africans in urban areas should be recognized as permanent and that African trade unions should be registered. Before writing his report, Smit told Rotarians in Durban that

the tremendous expansion of industry in South Africa had been made possible with the cheap labour of African workers. But the poverty and disease in urban areas had stirred the Committee with 'pity and shame', and these conditions 'were having a disintegrating influence on Native life and were undermining the health of generations upon which the country depended for its future'.<sup>6</sup> These statements and actions were not the start of a rosy dawn of liberalism in South Africa, as subsequent repression would show, but an attempt to moderate the demands of the African working class for fundamental change.

The pressing need for African workers to survive in the urban centres, their growing strength in production, and these signs of weakness in the ruling class, resulted in one of the most significant strike waves in South African history.<sup>7</sup> And yet for all the vigour of the African working class, a strong base was not laid for the permanent organization of the workers industrially and politically, and the impressive strike action of the early 1940s could not be sustained into the harsh conditions in the 1950s. The African trade unions which sprang up during the war were encouraged by official benevolence as much as the need for thorough working class organization, and were astonishingly weak when the mask of benevolence was dropped. In many ways, the 'unorganized' migrant workers who played an advanced part in the strike wave of 1942 were better able to continue their resistance into the period of heavy repression. The somewhat artificial quality of trade unionism among African workers and the lack of decisive victories in the most favourable conditions yet experienced by the African working class call for some comment as background to the situation of the togt workers who were a leading element in the resistance.

A few necessarily abbreviated points need to be made. The first is that African workers had real difficulties in developing a leadership which was of the class and capable of providing enduring administrative and indus-

trial work. The second was of the political leadership of the working class. Operating in the context of a broad anti-fascist popular front, the Communist Party did not follow a consistent policy of organizing African workers and opposed strikes which could damage war production. In the relative liberalism of the war period, the party advanced democratic demands such as arming the African soldiers, abolishing pass laws, and granting the vote to African people. Following a policy of defence of the Soviet Union and support for the struggle of the workers and peasants of Eastern Europe who were bearing the full brunt of the Nazi offensive, the party subordinated resistance to national oppression to the general needs of an anti-fascist front. This was justified by making a theoretical distinction between 'ordinary colonial oppression' to which Africans were subjected and fascism. 'There is a big constitutional difference between ordinary colonial oppression, even when it includes murder, and legalised terrorism as a system of Government enforced by a fascist dictatorship. Bad as the situation is here, one can read in the Press where a native suing police for violence, rare as it is, obtains a favourable verdict. But under fascism this is impossible.'<sup>8</sup> Valid although this distinction might have been in theory, it was made for political <sup>reasons</sup> rather than constitutional *theory*, to invite support from African people for the war effort. During this period the party reversed its espousal of the national liberation of the African people as the main task for general democratic reforms.<sup>9</sup> Not unexpectedly, during the war there was a strong development of a vigorous African nationalism with influence in the African working class.

These changes were most sharply evident in the post-war period when the projected plans for 'reconstruction' and reforms were shelved and the sacrifices made by the workers, far from being recompensed, were intensified. From a considerably weaker position than during the war, African workers particularly on the mines struggled to defend their living standards and consolidate their organizations. The history of the late 1940s until 1963

(when mass resistance to the apartheid state was decisively crushed) is one of constant struggle to rebuild and extend working class organization and resistance to the ever-increasing attacks of the apartheid state and employers. Black workers made up the backbone of the struggle against national oppression and for democracy in South Africa.

During the Second World War and the 1950s the comparatively 'free' form of labour (migrant workers paid on a daily basis in the Durban docks) was transformed into contract labour under a strict labour regime. This took place at a time of intense conflict in Durban characterized by a close identity of interest between stevedoring employers and the state, in which the issues of stabilization of the African labour force, employer-state responses to strike action, and specifically the formation of an employers' organization to control labour supply in the docks, were discussed and action taken to limit resistance to existing structures of labour control. In this period of class struggles the daily paid dock workers (both stevedoring and railway workers) revealed themselves as a volatile and class conscious element within the working class in Durban.

The struggles of the dock workers had a significant effect on the development of administrative measures to deal with labour relationship, on the argument on how to reconcile a smooth-flowing labour supply with tightened influx control, and on the intra-working class relationships between Indian and African workers. The process of laying down minimum wages for unskilled labour was initiated, controls were introduced to contain and direct the flood of workers from the reserves, influx control was implemented for the first time ('endorsing out' or deportation became a permanent feature of urban administration), and new relationships between Indian and African political and industrial organizations were born in the aftermath of the riots of January 1949. In Durban the base was laid for the mass organization of industrial workers which developed in the 1950s with the growth of SACTU

(the South African Congress of Trade Unions), a phenomenon which placed the Durban area as a leading centre of militant trade unionism, mass political action, and a high level of strike activity.

The dock workers were a significant although proportionately small section of the total African labour force by the late 1930s. As has been described in a number of surveys, the African workers in Durban were concentrated in the tertiary sector (a high proportion of domestic servants, transport, and commercial workers) with a growing proportion of workers in industry and construction.<sup>10</sup> The dock workers made up 43 per cent of the section of transport workers; 22 per cent railway workers (2,168) and 21 per cent (2,001) stevedoring workers.<sup>11</sup> The most profound characteristic of the African labour force in Durban was the extent of labour migration as evidenced by the preponderance of the working age group (15-60) out of the total African population, and an extraordinarily high masculinity ratio (4.13 as compared to 4.32 for the mining Witwatersrand).<sup>12</sup> This notable feature of the African labour force in Durban (in strong contrast to the relatively stabilized African populations in Port Elizabeth, East London, Kimberley and Bloemfontein) was a result of the emphasis placed by the state on retarding urbanization by a variety of measures controlling land occupation in urban and peri-urban areas and through a state policy reinforcing the role of the reserves in reproducing the particular form of migrant labour. Wolpe has argued that because the means of subsistence and the reproduction of labour power have been met from subsistence agriculture, the value of labour power of African workers has been reduced.<sup>13</sup>

When the migrant-labourer has access to means of subsistence, outside the capitalist sector, as he does in South Africa, then the relationship between wages and the cost of the production and reproduction of labour-power is changed. That is to say, capital is able to pay the worker below the cost of his reproduction.<sup>14</sup>

This argument has to be treated cautiously given the steady decline in agricultural productivity of land in the reserves but does help to explain why

Durban, where reserves were particularly accessible and where economically active males were more successfully separated from the household economy, has historically been a low wage area even in comparison with lesser developed areas such as Port Elizabeth.

The migrant workers' limited access to land has also been used by sections of the ruling class to argue against the enforcement of minimum wage determinations in the urban centres. In 1939/40 the Native Affairs Commission made a precise calculation of material benefits obtained by migrant workers maintaining their rural links. It estimated that the migrant worker had in addition to his wages a 'reserve subsidy' of approximately £30 per annum, equal to some 60 per cent of the then average black urban wage.<sup>15</sup> Despite the struggles of African workers and their organizations such as the Industrial and Commercial Union, during 1920-38 the most common wage of African workers in Durban was 18s a week; 58 per cent of wages being between 15s and 20s a week.<sup>16</sup>

#### Dock workers and wage struggles during the war

The dock workers in Durban had a long history of resistance to the general level of wages in the area and their specific conditions of employment. In a broader context they had taken up issues of wider economic and political struggle. They had led the struggles against the poll tax, against passes (which culminated in the death of a number of protesters in 1930 including the dock leader Johannes Nkosi), and the institution of a municipal monopoly in beer brewing. In 1940 the dock workers were a group of approximately 3,000 to 4,000 workers employed by the day by four major stevedoring companies and the South African Railways and Harbour. These workers were employed on average 3-4 days a week because of fluctuations in shipping but also because the employers wished to maintain a supply of labour at a level equal to that of the maximum demand which could be made under peak conditions, i.e. a permanent surplus. As in all ports

which have not undergone decasualization, it was in each company's interest to maintain a reserve supply of labour over average daily requirements. The pressure on wage rates was maintained by this reserve which encouraged competition among workers for vacancies every day. Behind this immediate reserve in the dock area pressed the relative surplus population (surplus to the increasingly deficient homestead economy) of the 'Native reserves' available to replace workers who 'struck' for higher wages at the docks, i.e. refused en masse to sign on for the day.

Accommodation for the dock workers (an issue which was resolved in the 1870s) was in barracks constructed by the municipality and some private employers. These barracks were constructed so that the greatest number of people possible could live in them, according to an African resident writing to a radical journal in April 1940:

there are narrow, dark, winding stairs, that lead to the room occupying the floor above, and the air is foul. . . for 3d a man is given what passes for a bed . . . this consists of the frame of a bed with a wooden board in place of the spring . . . the men must provide their own blankets . . . the rooms are terribly stuffy, the windows being situated so high that it would be a job to open them . . . the 'comfort' and 'rest' to be got from sleeping on a wooden board in a room where a harsh light burns throughout the night must be experienced to be appreciated.<sup>17</sup>

Barrack accommodation such as this was condemned by the Smit Commission which reported that the Bell Street compound (the primary accommodation for togt workers) was over-crowded, dirty, and quite unfit for the purpose for which it was being used'.<sup>18</sup> Apart from some extension of the premises, no improvements were made.

During the war and throughout the 1950s the dock workers established themselves as a leading section of the working class in Durban and adopted tactics which contrasted materially from those of the African trade unions of varying tendencies. Despite the recognition and institutionalization of

some skill differentials among the workers (the categories by the end of the 1950s were indunas, winchmen, gangwaymen, and stevedoring hands) there was a high degree of coordinated action. The position of the dock workers could be contrasted with that of labourers in industry who performed 'service' roles, e.g., sweepers and carriers in garment, leather, footwear, and furniture industries, and with the large number of domestic servants who were atomized among a large number of employers. Even in those industries where African workers were advancing into operative positions, such as in the metal industry, their position was not strategic in the labour process due to the relatively low level of skill involved in their work and their subordination in a tight pattern of skilled/operative/labourer relationships.

The dock workers were probably the only group of black workers in Durban who provided leadership from among their own ranks without relying on non-labouring educated strata who took up the leadership of working class organization during the Second World War. (There was a South African Railways and Harbour Union organized by Philemon Tsele which operated on a national basis, but it appears that the dock workers employed by the railways in Durban owed their allegiance primarily to the togt element in the harbour labour force rather than to weekly employed workers employed by the railways.) Some time in 1939 more than 1,000 togt workers elected Zulu Phungula as their leader. Phungula was a migrant worker from the Ixopo district in Natal and became a fiery populist leader who would be a key figure in the struggles of the dock workers.<sup>19</sup> His style of leadership was clearly distinguishable from that of the urbanized intelligentsia who led the African trade unions during the war years based on the administrative recognition granted to unregistered unions during that period.

There was a considerable increase of working class action during the Second World War brought about by increased organization, rising prices, and expanded production. In 1939 there were five strikes in Natal by

African workers in whaling, timber, excavation, and coal mining, and in the country as a whole there was increased strike activity. The state responded by providing increased controls over strike action and the mobility of labour and by increasing the activity of the Wage Board to provide remedial action.<sup>20</sup> The process of wage investigation and setting of minimum wage levels by the Wage Board set in motion by the wage demands of African workers in 1937 in Durban considerably heightened the consciousness of dock workers and led to a militant upsurge in strike activity. Following its investigation the Wage Board published a wage determination for unskilled labour on 27 September 1940, of a minimum wage of 20s a week and 4s a day which benefited 11,410 out of a total of 15,528 workers. The togt workers who were already earning 4s a day did not benefit at all even though their skills were acknowledged. The Wage Board said that it had not been possible to separate out the stevedoring togt workers for a higher wage despite a recognition that 'their work requires greater care and skill'.

It is to be noted that the wages recommended, whilst they involved the maximum load which the employers concerned (i.e. as a whole) may reasonably be asked to carry, do not directly benefit what may be regarded as the most advanced class of the harbour workers, namely the daily paid stevedoring employees. The reason is ... that some of the employers utilize 'togt' monthly, and contract labour for the combined trades of stevedoring and bunkering, and the increase recommended for the two latter classes is as much as the employer can at this stage carry.<sup>21</sup>

Although their position relative to the average unskilled labourer's wage had deteriorated, the dock workers were experiencing a fairly high level of employment because of stimulated war production. In the year 1939/40 the harbour tonnage landed at Durban exceeded two million tons for only the third time in the history of the port and the total tonnage handled increased by 493,911 tons over the previous twelve-month period.<sup>22</sup> During May 1941, eight months after the wage determination came into operation, four spokesmen

for the dock workers submitted demands for 8s a day to the Commissioner of Native Affairs in Durban. A counter offer was made but not accepted by the workers.<sup>23</sup> The demands were then backed up by short-term strike action on 27 May. There then followed a lengthy correspondence between the employers (who argued no significant wage increases were possible) and the Department of Labour (who felt an increase to 5s a day was reasonable).

Following two other strikes among African workers in July, the stevedoring workers came out on strike on 17 August 1941 in support of demands for 8s a day and 10s for working on Sundays. The strike began initially at the Bell Street togt barracks, but soon spread throughout all barracks housing dock workers.<sup>24</sup> Some 1,000 railway workers on the wharves were unable to work and the docks came to a standstill. The dock workers gathered around the compounds in Bell Street quietly discussing their grievances and listening to speeches by their leaders. A meeting of municipal officials, employers, and the police was held on the same day. The stevedoring employers now argued that they did not object to any increase (the costs would be simply transferred to the shipping companies they served), but that the change in wages would have to be imposed by government regulations because of long-term contractual obligations in the stevedoring trade. At this stage the Department of Labour which was acting to attempt to defuse strike situations for fear of general working class action felt that the employers were stalling on the issue. The Divisional Inspector of Labour, J. P. Martens, reported that: 'The employers hitherto have not been helpful and are in my opinion shielding behind the National Emergency. Irrevocable long-term contracts are a useful excuse but such contracts should not be entered into while operating under a Determination with the possibility always present of demands for improvement'.<sup>25</sup> During the negotiations between the authorities and employers a specific wage investigation into the stevedoring trade was rejected as too cumbersome and time-consuming and it was decided to

call in Ivan Walker, who had been appointed the Controller of Industrial Manpower in terms of war regulations, to ratify wage increases through proclaiming emergency regulations.<sup>26</sup>

Since a strike in the harbour affected the strategic shipping situation, Walker was rushed down from Pretoria and discussed the wage issue with two representatives of the dock workers: Zulu Phungula and Willie Kumalo. He chaired a meeting of employers and authorities<sup>27</sup> the day after the strike had begun and brought about agreement between employers and state officials on a similar basis to that originally proposed by the Department of Labour: 4s 6d a day, a cost of living allowance of not less than 6d a day, and special rates for overtime. The workers' representatives did not agree to these proposals as they were 'not at the notch' which they wanted, but the workers agreed to go back to work. Despite this proposal, which was later officially published,<sup>28</sup> the dock workers had not accepted that the wage issue was closed. The stevedoring trade was declared a 'controlled industry' in terms of War Measure No 6 of 1941 which gave the Controller of Industrial Manpower powers to regulate employment, wages and working conditions, and to settle any labour dispute.<sup>29</sup> The arbitrary methods used and the low level of wages prescribed aroused the hostility of the trade unions and social movements. The Guardian concluded that the Government had brought the strike to an end 'without compelling the employers to make any substantial concessions to the workers', and that Walker's action had struck a blow against all dock workers in South Africa. In Cape Town dockers were already earning 8s 8d a day and state intervention and the use of war regulations as a strike-breaking weapon could undermine trade union action.<sup>30</sup>

The dock workers persisted in their demand for 8s a day and drew upon the contradictory nature of the wage regulations which had not covered the position of railway workers. Fearing further strike action after a

round of strikes by other African workers towards the end of 1941 negotiations started once again, and the railways system manager called together a meeting of railway officials and representatives of togt workers on 11 March 1942. Phungula argued that the stevedoring employers had offered to pay any wage laid down by the government and had agreed to pay 8s per day,<sup>31</sup> but now the workers had been cheated out of their increase. He attempted to drive a wedge between the state officials and the employers, 'it would seem that the government is refusing to give us 8s per day, because our employers have already agreed that we should get the 8s'.<sup>32</sup> He said the workers had concluded that the government was withholding the wage increases. Workers had to pay for accommodation at work, dipping of cattle, taxation, and were now also being asked to contribute towards the Paramount Chief's War Fund, he argued. In putting forward the wage demands of the dock workers Phungula was arguing for the dock workers to be accepted as full proletarians (i.e. rejecting the conception of a rural subsidy) and to be paid a wage which would enable workers and their families to live under urban conditions, arguing for increased wages for productive workers as opposed to white clerical workers, and implicitly rejecting 'scientific' notions such as the poverty datum line as a standard for wage increases. He argued from the perceived necessities of urban workers, but without adopting a trade unionist conception of a wage demand (i.e. existing wage + x per cent). Reflecting the revolutionary aspirations of the togt workers he put forward a bold wage demand (25s a day) which was several times the existing wages of the workers. In his arguments he brought out the fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the revolutionary expectations and needs of the working class and the impoverishment of the workers under capitalism.

We have been taught by the Europeans what to eat and we like to eat the same things as the European, for instance eggs and tea in the mornings, we would like to fly in aeroplanes and drive round in motor cars. The shops are full of clothes and motor cars, but we cannot buy these things because we have no

money ... We do not want 8s a day, we want 25s a day (the wage of white clerks employed by the stevedoring companies). Even if we get 8s a day we will not be satisfied. If we had not agreed with our masters for 8s we would not have asked for that today ... the government only gives us an empty dish to lick.<sup>33</sup>

Walker denied outright that it had ever been agreed to pay 8s and said there must have been some misunderstanding between the workers and the stevedoring employers. The authorities had an interest in denying this increase (which was the existing wage level in the Cape Town docks) as it would have changed the cost structure of transport and threatened the whole structure of wages in Durban. Walker debated the issue for a while and then issued an ultimatum: if the workers did not wish to work for less than 8s they could 'go home' and other workers would be recruited. Phungula rejected these alternatives and countered the threat by telling the officials, 'the government must show us where to go because our homes are here in Durban'. The argument between Phungula and Walker was not over whether the dock workers were migrants who were forced to maintain their links with the land because urban rights were denied to them but over the working class right to work which was being denied by the state. Phungula was in effect arguing that African workers were fully proletarianized and challenging the state's powers to crush the organization of workers and allocate labour in the interests of the employers. Walker's ultimatum showed a new level of determination by the authorities to deal decisively with the particular conditions of class struggle in Durban and to maintain the overall level of labour circulation in the Durban labour market by restricting the workers' rights to a level of wages which would permit complete proletarianization. When necessary the authorities were prepared to make use of the reserve supply of dock labour (to be obtained by breaking organized action and by recruiting those not then employed from the urban area), and if this failed, to draw upon the relative surplus population in the rural areas.

Despite the ultimatum and the stevedoring trade having been declared a 'controlled industry', a further strike broke out on 28 July 1942 in support of the workers' demands. The war government was placed in a quandary by this latest strike as it did not want to disrupt shipping or recruitment of Africans to the army even further by punitive counter action. At the same time there was strong pressure for the authorities to come to terms with the strikers because of the strategic implications of the major port being disrupted when the movement of war material was essential. The strike came under the control of Phungula and ten committee members. Two days after the strike had begun he was arrested, but then brought out of prison the following day on condition that he urge the workers to return to work. But when he was brought before the strikers by the police, he told them to carry on. The article which appeared in Inkululeko written by Wilson Cele (a journalist/trade unionist of the Communist Party) gives a vivid account of the oratory and colour of the event.

When Phungula got out of the car with the police, he greeted the people in the style of Shaka: 'Bayete Zulu'. He then started to address the public: 'The Dutch people have seen that General Botha had fought for them and today they say that the Natives are good; we better fight and die for what we want until we get it. I do not know what will be the outcome of it as they have now even taken our country. Look, we now dig gold for them, diamonds for them, and all they do is to sit on the chairs which can even reach heaven. What makes them not to give us enough money to feed our children?'

The Europeans said: 'Well, go to work'. The strikers said 'We won't go', and some of the strikers started speaking to the public. When the white people found out that the strikers were not prepared to go to work, they asked Phungula to tell them that if they went to work he would be released. One of the committee members then asked the white people if they thought that it was Phungula's strike, and told them that all the strikers were after was money. After the meeting, Mr. Phungula told the public that he was prepared to go to jail and that the strike should continue.<sup>34</sup>

In his speech Phungula brought out the political dimensions of the struggles of the black working class despite some moments of confusion (which could have arisen in transcription and from the official translation). His uncompromising militancy, and the inability of the state to co-opt him despite considerable pressure, his radical style and imagery, all reflected the type of leadership expected by the dock workers.

The strike which came at a time when the Communist Party of South Africa and other left-wing groups were mobilizing support for a Second Front in Europe did not initially enjoy their support. The first report of the strike in The Guardian described the workers as being 'engaged on vital work for the war effort, and their refusal to work means a serious hold-up for the many ships tied up at the quaysides in the Bay', and subsequently wrote approvingly of Walker's intervention.<sup>35</sup> These views reflected the policy of the Communist Party 'towards a peaceful settlement of disputes and avoiding of any strikes or any other action that will hinder the war effort'.<sup>36</sup> The hostility of The Guardian to the independent action taken by the togt workers was only overcome after the drastic action taken by the state to reassert control in the docks had aroused angry protests from the labour movement.

The strategy of using Phungula as a hostage having failed, Walker finally promulgated War Measure 86 on 31 July 1942 which gave the police the authority to expel any togt worker from the municipal area if he refused to work at the prescribed wage. Any labourer refusing to work under these conditions could be fined up to £25 (equivalent to about 100 day's work for togt labourers) or imprisonment for six months or be liable to both fine and imprisonment. The state used this extreme measure to break the strike as the togt workers' demands posed a challenge to the general level of unskilled wages in Durban. As it was, strike action gained momentum among African workers in industries employing migrant workers in Durban

and its hinterland: in brick and tile, plaster boards, quarrying, and sugar. A fundamental problem faced by the authorities was the loose form of control over employment at the docks; the togt system regulated only the relationship between workers and their employers during their working hours and if the labourers decided not to work on a particular day there was not much that could be done in terms of the law that could force them to return to work apart from deportation from the urban area. Contract labour would have made the workers liable to prosecution for breach of contract, but was not considered as appropriate to the labour process in the docks at this stage.

The local press reported that by 4 August all the registered togt workers had returned to work after the promulgation of special war measures. It was reported that Major A. J. Smart, District Commandant of the Police, was appointed to give effect to the regulations but had found the use of force to be unnecessary as the workers had returned. By the next day, however, the Natal Mercury carried the news that 'prompt steps were taken to replace the togt labour and the position is now normal'.<sup>37</sup> Apparently the strike of the togt workers had been broken by African troops sent down from Ladysmith despite qualms about the effect of strike-breaking on the military recruitment drive, and it was by no means certain when full work activity was resumed at the docks. These official decisions aroused the anger of the Cape Town Stevedoring and Dock Workers Union (CTSDWU) which expressed 'strong dissatisfaction' with the repression of strike action at a general meeting on 5 August.<sup>38</sup> It was decided to send a deputation from the CTSDWU to Durban to establish a branch of the union there. Phungula was committed for trial on charges of incitement to violence after being remanded several times. Eventually he was granted bail of £15 provided he did not address meetings of his fellow workers unless an Inspector of Labour was present. Advocate Harry Bloom in asking for bail pointed out that Phungula was recognized as leader by togt workers and 'could be of special

assistance in present negotiations to convert the dockers into a trade union along the lines of the Cape dock workers'. The Secretary of the CTSDWU, F.C. Welcome, arrived in Durban and reported that progress was being made in the formation of a branch of the union, with Bloom apparently the mid-wife of the new organization. The local Department of Labour apparently accepted these conditions and encouraged Phungula to form a trade union which could be given official recognition. While he was still awaiting trial for incitement in September, Phungula was appointed organizer of the CTSDWU in Durban, and with F.C. Welcome and J. Veldtman held several meetings at the Bell Street barracks.<sup>39</sup>

These exceptional circumstances and the semi-official character of intervention by the Cape trade unionists provide the basis for understanding the form of trade unionism which was expected would emerge. The Cape trade unionists presented trade unionism as a conciliatory organization which could engage in negotiations with employers gradually to improve wages and conditions. Strike action by workers was discouraged in favour of 'constitutional' advances. Presenting themselves as experienced leaders of dock workers, the Cape unionists blurred over the vast differences in conditions of struggle in both ports; the revolutionary struggles of the togt workers against the police and employers and their impressive strike record were ignored or denigrated. They also forgot to mention that no improvements in wages had been secured by the CTSDWU from its formation up to 1942; illusions were created that the higher wages 'traditionally' paid to labourers in Cape Town could be attained by the Durban labourers by negotiations with employers. They also did not explain how the CTSDWU was able to exist as a 'constitutional' organization and gain registration in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act — because of the presence of Coloured workers and Africans who, in the Cape, were not forced to carry passes until much later than workers in other provinces. Welcome told the workers that the present wage of 4s 'over which there had been several fruitless

clashes with employers' was barely equal to what Cape Town dockers had got in 1919. He spelt out a strategy for organization and negotiated improvements which provided for increased wage differentiation among the workers, an issue which had not been raised previously as a demand of the workers as a whole.<sup>40</sup> 'By strictly constitutional means, using the machinery of negotiation, Cape stevedores through their union had raised the average wage to 8s a day, with corresponding increases for winchmen, gangwaymen and foremen.' The trade union was enthusiastically accepted by the dockers who turned down Welcome's proposal of a weekly subscription of 6d which they considered too small and demanded that the subscription be 1s. The workers also agreed to levy their members to raise a fund for the defence of Phungula. Abel M.S. Mhlongo was elected secretary responsible to a small committee. In September he wrote to the local Divisional Inspector requesting recognition in respectful terms. 'It is hoped that from henceforth grievances will be settled on constitutional lines, also that power tactics will be on both sides avoided'.<sup>41</sup> After leaving Durban, Veldtman subsequently wrote to the South African Police in Durban that peaceful negotiations would be used by togt workers and that there would be no more retarding of the war effort.<sup>42</sup> By adopting the administrative form of trade unionism and open organization Phungula and the dock workers had by no means moderated their position or accepted collective bargaining through wage differentiation. A subsequent letter by Phungula and Mhlongo to the Controller of Industrial Manpower in Pretoria made further demands of the order of a flat rate of 25s per day and more.<sup>43</sup> Phungula was told that any further strike action would lead to the immediate replacement of the workers, and against this background he accepted the concessions on the terms offered, i.e. a wage freeze binding for two years. On this basis the state secured industrial peace in the harbour for the war years.

### Trade unions and the suppression of working class action

Having secured its position in the harbour, the state was able to deal firmly with strike action in other industries in Durban, particularly with those strikes involving joint action between African and Indian workers of which there were a number in late 1942 in the paper, laundry, and textile industries.<sup>44</sup> As a result of inter-racial cooperation initiated and sustained by the Communist Party in Durban, a number of parallel and independent African trade unions had been formed in the early 1940s. Although the Communist Party provided the stimulus and resources for these unions, there was little central direction and control and a variety of tendencies developed, particularly as a number of registered trade unions developed parallel unions for African workers under their control. Apart from those unions formed by members of the Communist Party there were a group of unions with a definite Africanist tendency (of whom Jacob Nyaose, later a leading trade unionist in the Federation of Free African Trade Unions, was the foremost), and another section subordinated to the registered trade unions (particularly those in the garment and furniture industries). As the number of African workers in manufacturing industry increased, a united working class was essential for strike action to be successful. Such unity in the paper board making industry (where African workers were in the majority) and in the textile industry (where Indian workers were dominant) secured victories in both cases in 1942.<sup>45</sup>

The successful thrust of workers' organization and the growth of working class unity not only in Natal but more particularly in the Transvaal, where there were a number of serious strikes and mass unrest towards the end of 1942, brought a concerted counter-attack by employers and the state. On 19 December the Government proclaimed War Measure 145 of 1942 which outlawed strikes by African workers, exposed strikers to a prohibitive maximum penalty of a £500 fine or three years' imprisonment, and imposed compulsory arbitration at the discretion of the Minister of Labour.<sup>46</sup> As

the Simons argue, the measure confirmed the subordinate position of African workers even though it was immediately designed to meet a particularly forceful upsurge of strike action.<sup>47</sup>

The strike wave, which included Durban dock workers, had shaken the confidence of the ruling class and threatened to sweep into strategic sectors such as power and mining. Most of the strikes involved migrant workers in the towns who were determined to overturn the cheap labour system with demands for a living wage. The strike movement was wrongly characterized <sup>by the Simons</sup> as 'sporadic' and 'local' and canalizing the workers' aspirations 'in well-worn grooves' making no lasting impression on wage patterns or opportunities for employment.<sup>48</sup> Strikes which spread throughout the major industrial centres and even into plantation agriculture brought about the most rapid and sustained increase in African wages before the 1973 strikes.<sup>49</sup> The state responded by offering the false promise of eventual full recognition to African trade unions who were expected to discipline their members and by stepping up the activity of the Wage Board. Before the end of 1943, however, the reforms and adjustments made by the state in the face of working class pressure had come to an end as the counter-revolution of the post-war period became evident. In Durban employers responded to militant working class action by attempting to build company unions and by an increasingly coordinated response to crush strikes. The suppression of strike action at Dunlop rubber factory marks a watershed in the momentum and direction of working class organization.

The strike at Dunlop, which broke out late in December 1942 in response to the imposition of a company union and the dismissal of members of the non-racial Rubber Workers' Union, was decisive in undermining radical leadership in registered trade unions and in causing distrust and hostility between Indian and African workers. During the strike for the reinstatement of the victimized workers and for recognition of the union which was

supported by Indian and African members, the employers resorted to recruiting African workers from the reserves in busloads.<sup>50</sup> Despite a prolonged and bitter struggle supported by the left-wing of the labour movement and particularly by Zulu Phungula, Philemon Tsele of the SARH Workers' Union, and Gladman Nxumalo of the Metal Workers' Union, the union members were replaced and no further Indian workers employed. While there were 378 African workers employed in December 1942, in January 1943, 290 of these workers were dismissed, and 581 new workers taken on, displacing Indian and African union members. African employment increased to a peak of 1,250 workers in June and July 1945 and the company was confident enough to have a survey of the African labour force made in the immediate post-war years.<sup>51</sup> Through a selective use of the reserve army of labour, in this case as strike breakers, labour militancy was curbed for the rest of the war period and non-racial trade unionism blunted. Zulu Phungula, who was possibly the only person capable of providing inspired leadership to migrant workers was banished from the Durban area for five years.<sup>52</sup>

Almost simultaneously with the deportation of Phungula the Railway and Harbour Non-European Workers' Union was formed to include African, Coloured and Indian workers as members.<sup>53</sup> As important as the repressive role of the state was the response of employers. Management from multinational companies (Dunlop's played a leading role) and from sectors of industry in Durban such as the textile industry and stevedoring trade, coalesced in the wake of the Dunlop strike to form the Natal Employers' Association. This Association aimed to provide specialist information on labour issues and 'to enable industry to present a united front to extravagant demands of organized labour', in particular the left trade unions. The Association was to prove essential in coordinating the policies of employers in different firms and industries towards trade unions, and the interests of employers and the state in regard to measures to suppress strike action, and implement effectively urban regulations directing the flow of African labour supply.

While the Dunlop strike had the effect of increasing the coordination of the employers' response to organized working class action it also had the corresponding negative effect of heightening the problems of working class unity. The strike accentuated the tendency for political activists in the Indian community to be diverted from working class organization (in particular from the organization of unregistered trade unions of Indian and African workers) towards political action in defence of the Indian community. While Communists had taken a leading role in the establishment of trade unions of Indian and African workers in the early 1940s, towards the end of the 1940s these unions were described by Ringrose as being basically apolitical and having only limited links with political movements such as sharing the same offices.<sup>54</sup> The direction of political action was more towards aggressive defence of the trading, investment, and residential rights of Indian people (the African National Congress in Natal, led by A.W.G. Champion, at this time being virtually dormant and almost limited to a pressure group making the same demands for the African people). The tendency among Indian workers was towards inward-looking trade unionism keenly aware of the necessity of protecting selected industries and occupations for Indian employment. In the atmosphere of political independence for India and the excitement of the passive resistance campaign of 1946,<sup>55</sup> contact between Indian and African workers and trade unionists became superficial. More than that, at a time when Indian traders and landowners were coming under increasing pressure from the state,<sup>56</sup> political mobilization in the struggle against segregation of the Indian community subordinated Indian trade unions and workers to the defence of the Indian petty-bourgeoisie. In evidence to the Natal Indian Judicial Commission, the secretary of the Chemical Industry Employees' Union, E. J. Moolla, said that White agitation against Indians acquiring property was aimed at stopping Indians from competing economically as a capitalist class.

The Indians in hostels and as servants in houses were not objected to, but directly an Indian acquired property near a European the cry was raised of Indian penetration. That showed that the opposition was to the economic advancement of the Indian.

Mr. A.L. Barns (Member of Commission): Do you want the Indian to become a capitalist class?

Mr. Moolla: In the present constitution of South Africa, yes. <sup>57</sup>

In this situation the tendency was for African trade unions in Durban to develop 'on their own lines' and to avoid collective action with registered trade unions. Many of these unions took on a strong Africanist flavour, while some of the largest Indian trade unions (for example, the Garment Workers' Union and the Furniture Workers' Industrial Union) were actually opposed to close cooperation between Indian and African workers. There was undoubtedly an increase in hostility between African and Indian workers during this period. African workers saw the expansion of industrial employment and upward mobility in certain industries and occupations (for example, municipal employment and weaving) as being blocked by Indian workers. The rapid expansion of employment in manufacturing during the war years to some extent obscured this problem, but with the down turn of economic growth in the immediate post-war period, the lines of demarcation became clearer.

In other respects, however, although the relationship between African workers and the Indian petty bourgeoisie was basically exploitative, Indian enterprises did enable African workers and their families to break out of the straitjacket of municipal control. Indian traders provided the basic infrastructure of the squatters' slums: the bus services and retail outlets — the services which could be provided because of the particular position of Indian people as a 'buffer group' in the racial hierarchy of urban segregation. In the Cato Manor area on land owned by Indian people, there were only a few shacks in 1932—by 1939 their number had grown to 500, and by 1944

there were some 3,000 shacks housing about 17,000 African people.<sup>58</sup> About half of the African population in Durban was estimated to be living in shack slums on Indian-owned land at this time. Some of these people were dock workers who caught the early buses into the harbour area.

### Proletarianization, influx control and unemployment insurance

During the war years there was an undoubted increase in the number of Africans who were forced into wage labour through the degeneration of the rural economy in the reserves and the application of government regulations to redistribute land to locate the growing numbers of landless workers in the reserves and not in the urban areas. The numerous government commissions which investigated the conditions of rural impoverishment in the reserves merely recognized a process which was already well advanced: considerable inequality among the residents of the reserves, the growth of a landless and cattleless African rural proletariat totally dependent on wage labour for its reproduction, and a large proportion of African workers who owned some cattle and had limited rights to arable land for whom agricultural production met only a small amount of their material needs and who were also basically dependent on wage labour. One after the other the commissions and other contemporary reports describe the conditions of decline in agricultural production, massive erosion, ill-health, and permanent dependence on food imports to feed the reserve population. While many of the reports describe the growing inequality of income, the wide ranges of ownership of cattle and access to land, none of them describe any significant peasant economy for even the better endowed.<sup>59</sup> The Lansdown Commission which acknowledged the differentiation in ownership of cattle and access to arable land argued that the Africans who came to work on the mines fell below the average in income and formed part of the 'poorer class' of worker-peasants, who were totally dependent on wage labour. 'For those natives who own no land or stock the Reserve subsistence is but a myth, and it is no doubt this class who find it necessary to work almost continuously on the mine with

only brief periods of stay in the Reserves'.<sup>60</sup> Despite a large group of workers having no agricultural subsidy to their wages, the state increased its efforts during the 1940s to force African workers to maintain their rural ties through proclamations requiring rural residents to return regularly to keep up their rights to land, through the establishment of 'villages' for the landless, and also through the operation of the Urban Areas Act which made it extremely difficult for African people not born in the urban areas to qualify for residence. Despite these regulations and policies this period saw an acceleration in the number of African workers who brought their families to the urban areas and demanded the rights to urban working class residence and a level of wages appropriate to the cost of the reproduction of their labour in urban conditions.

Material factors increased the dependence on wage labour and a further decline in subsistence agriculture in Natal. Drought conditions were widespread during the period 1944/45 (with the exception of the southern coastal areas), and the Msinga and Ladysmith areas were particularly badly hit, the latter being declared a drought area. Cattle losses were particularly heavy in Msinga, Ladysmith, Nongoma, and Hlabisa districts, and there was a severe shortage of the staple mealies.<sup>61</sup> The following year 1945/46 did not bring relief. There was drought again in many areas of the province, a severe loss of cattle, and a great reduction in harvests. As in the previous year, special arrangements had to be made to ensure that the available mealie supplies were equitably distributed.<sup>62</sup> The migrant workers of Natal and Zululand had experienced considerable impoverishment by the end of the 1940s. In some areas it would not be an exaggeration to talk of the collapse of significant agricultural production, while in the few districts where cereal production was increasing the total output only supported a fraction of the total population of the district.<sup>63</sup> Rapidly declining agricultural production meant that the amount of maize imported into each district increased proportionately, which resulted in heavier

dependence on wage labour by migrant workers. Those migrant workers who were trying to maintain their links with the reserves and some level of subsistence agriculture, both of which required cattle, suffered losses heavier than those of Africans in other reserves. The maintenance of the cattle population despite losses of over ten per cent in any one year must have required a considerable cost; at £5 each the 611,000 cattle which died during the four years in the table would have cost in the region of £3 million.

Table 5.1

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<u>Cattle losses in Natal reserves</u>				
	Cattle owned (000)	Losses (000)	Natal losses per cent	All reserves per cent
1946	1,106	195	17.6	13.6
1947	1,048	162	15.5	11.3
1948	1,058	118	10.9	10.3
1949	1,111	136	12.2	11.1

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Source: Department of Agricultural Economics and Marketing, 1961, Handbook of Agricultural Statistics, 1904-1950, pp. 18 and 37.

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There was a considerable increase in the number of African workers seeking employment during the 1940s and specific measures to control the movement of labour were proposed. In response to the fluctuations in employment and the increased flow of migrant labour to Durban, for the first time the implementation of influx control was seriously considered. The initial controls over the direction of the flow of labour were, however, controls over the movement from the reserve areas (now in the language of separate development, 'efflux control'). On completion of large-scale

war contracts for the Defence Department and the Admiralty in 1944, large numbers of African workers were thrown out of work and suggestions were made to restrict the flow of labour to the city. At the request of the City Council the Chief Native Commissioner circularized all magistrates in Natal and Zululand to restrict the flow of labour to Durban until employment expanded again.<sup>64</sup> By June 1944, Philemon Tsele, Chairman of the local Anti-Pass Committee in Durban, reported that the pass laws were again being rigidly enforced with police raids at night and deportation from Durban for two years for those considered 'idlers'.<sup>65</sup> The considerable decline in employment between 1945-47 was probably the stimulus for the formula agreed upon in 1946 to tighten controls over the presence of Africans in Durban and to initiate criminal proceedings against those workers not registered with the Native Administration Department.<sup>66</sup>

Arising from increased resistance to representative bodies (particularly a move to boycott the Native Representative Council and local elections), demonstrations in the city, and antagonism to the tightening of controls over the mobility of African people, a Commission was appointed to investigate the grievances of Africans in 1947. This Commission examined the provision of housing (which was the major complaint of the witnesses) and considered the various arguments over the location of the industrial army of labour. Justice F. N. Broome, the Commissioner, reported that most Whites thought the 'Native problem' of Durban could be solved by expelling redundant African workers from the area. Representative of this opinion was an article in a Durban newspaper which reported that between 3,000 and 4,000 African 'vagrants' had been deported to the reserves by the Native Affairs Department in 1947. 'Substantial as this number is, the problem of Durban's surplus Native population is as serious as ever ...', the newspaper concluded. Broome disagreed with this analysis and defended the maintenance of a reserve supply of labour within

the urban area to meet the requirements of seasonal industries (Durban has a marked holiday season) and the harbour.

The demands of industry . . . fluctuate; all Native labourers cannot be employed all the time. But the requirements of industry demand that there shall be readily available a reservoir of labour that can be drawn upon to meet seasonal demands. This is particularly the case in the harbour area.<sup>67</sup>

The arguments over the necessity of maintaining the reserve supply of labourers in the urban area and the contrary demands of agriculture came to a head over the issue of unemployment insurance for African workers. The implementation of the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1946 made possible a relatively stable urban proletariat to meet the fluctuations in the demand for industrially experienced African labour. The Act, insofar as it included African workers, existed in contradiction to the arguments of a reserve subsidy to the wage labour of African workers and recognized by implication an urban proletariat with no links to the reserves. Since the Act did not expressly exclude migrant workers it received the fierce opposition of agricultural employers who complained vociferously that migrant labour was being diverted from agriculture to industry.<sup>68</sup> Following an allegation by the Assistant Native Commissioner for Natal that large numbers of African workers were drawing benefits from the unemployment insurance fund, agricultural employers inundated Members of Parliament with letters and telegrams demanding that Africans should be excluded from the Act entirely and that unemployed workers be placed in agricultural employment.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the continued increase in African employment in industry in the late 1940s, African workers struggling to maintain themselves and their families in urban conditions were under pressure from Native Administration officials, landowners threatening eviction, and declining real wages. The few benefits for urban African workers and recognition of urban rights were being undermined and would be restricted later.

### General strike or racial conflict?

During the late 1940s the left in the South African Indian Congress won its ascendancy through championing the demands of the Indian people against segregationary measures, and against the vacillation of the political leadership of the Indian trading class. This campaign involved a broad alliance between petty bourgeois strata (e.g. the Indian traders, teachers, landowners, and professionals) and the Indian workers, but was not an inward looking movement. By 1947 the left within the South African Indian Congress was strong enough to lead to the Dadoo—Xuma—Naicker pact which heralded the growing cooperation of the South African Indian Congress and the African National Congress. Despite these achievements of the new leaders who 'were radicals fixed with a burning desire to articulate in a forthright, militant manner the grievances and aspirations of the Indian people,<sup>70</sup> the unity of African and Indian workers in Durban was distant and the broad cooperation and collective organization of the early 1940s had disintegrated. In advancing the struggle against all forms of racial oppression experienced by the Indian people the Indian working class leadership was brought into direct support for mass campaigns taking up the demands of the Indian petty bourgeoisie, a group which had an exploitative relationship with the masses of African people. In response to the increasingly militant advance of the interests of the Indian people by the left leadership in the South African Indian Congress, a basis for common political campaigns with the African people was created (as argued by Pahad), but also distrust of the motives of Indian politicians was voiced (most emphatically by the trading section of the African petty bourgeoisie).<sup>71</sup>

The immediate post-war period was characterized not by united working class action but by the growth of an African cooperative movement which included many African workers (at least two of the cooperatives were based on compounds). By June 1946 there were 95 cooperatives affiliated to the Bantu Cooperative Society, most of which were buying clubs.

These cooperatives (popularly known as Nabantukop) penetrated the rural areas and 'whipped up considerable enthusiasm ... particularly because of its nationalistic slogan of "Mazibuye Emasweni": "Let them (our cattle and our wealth) come back from foreigners!".<sup>72</sup> The journal of the Bantu Cooperative Society, Ukubambisana, carried reports on the growth of the movement and also exposures of the prices of goods in Indian shops.<sup>73</sup> The revival of the cooperative movement among African people in the post-war period continued a line of Catholic thought and action initiated by Father Bernard Huss which aimed at developing popular movements led by Christians which could displace mass organizations which tended towards militant working class action and Marxist language.<sup>74</sup>

The African trade union movement which was described as not comparing unfavourably with similar movements in other areas was in a state of decay. The movement was weakened by a lack of stability rather than by a decrease in the number of unions. There was a lack of cooperation between them, and no African organization in Natal could claim to represent the movement as a whole. The nearest approach was the Natal Federation of African Trade Unions which had five unions affiliated in 1947 and which took an Africanist perspective and rejected non-African members. 'It would not accept as a member any union which had non-Natives in its membership roll, or which had a political creed.' The Federation, which was described as 'neither very active nor very representative' in 1947, was moribund by 1948.<sup>75</sup> Gilbert Coka (who stood trial after the 1946 strike of African mine workers) described the trade unions in 1948 as 'fast going to sleep' and argued there had been a backward trend in political organization.<sup>76</sup> In comparison to the early war years there was a decline in strike activity although strikes continued in industries likely to employ migrant workers: sugar plantations, dairy, and quarrying. Emergency regulations introduced during the war were not withdrawn and there was a tendency to tighten controls both over the residence of African workers in town and at

the workplace, and to prosecute workers who came out on strike. The employers in the docks produced a new series of regulations which were only withdrawn after decisive resistance by the workers. The new regulations laid down that if the workers went on leave for three months or more they would be dismissed on return, or be re-employed as beginners at a lower wage. Workers were also told they would be penalized if any of them stopped work to meet relatives (who would have come long distances to see them) or if they arrived late for work. When these regulations were explained to the workers early in June 1948 they immediately came out on strike and some 2,000 workers marched to the railway system manager's office. The manager refused to come out and the workers were told to appoint a delegation. They refused, demanded that the regulations be withdrawn immediately, and argued with officials for several hours. They only returned to work when assured that the regulations would be reconsidered and warned that if the regulations were not withdrawn altogether, they would strike again.<sup>77</sup>

The incident displayed the uneasiness of the workers after the war at finding that the material sacrifices which had been imposed on them as part of the war effort were being intensified. Zulu Phungula, who had completed his term of banishment, openly returned<sup>78</sup> to Durban in 1948 to take up his former occupation as a toggt worker. On 20 September 1948 he issued a report on the increased impoverishment of African workers; describing both the problems of getting employment, the needs of squatters, and the problems of the rural population.<sup>79</sup> What was needed was an expansion of employment for the waves of migrant workers streaming into Durban: 'One generation came in yesterday (by train) ... all this generation will never get work.' Women were settling in town with the aim of supplementing male wages to provide collectively for the children and illicit brewing (isigata) was essential for the family to survive. Peasant production, he argued, was becoming impossible because the land had been

appropriated by the state for white farmers ('its all farms all over') and intensive farming required a much higher level of capital investment. Rural food production was becoming impossible for the most impoverished peasants who no longer owned oxen and had no money for agricultural implements.

Ploughing requires oxen and oxen require grazing grounds and they cost money because we haven't got them ... we have got to hire them. Cultivators, rakes, sowing machines (planters), etc., all cost money. How can one plough because all this (costs) money?

The relative surplus population was rapidly expanding in the reserves as a product of the homestead growing within a confined land area, and arable land was no longer available.

In the location my grandfather had 5 wives and 20 young men. Let me mention one hut of the 5. My father had 4 brothers. His elder brother married 2 wives, the second had 4 wives, my father had 2, the other had 2 and the 5th had 3 wives. I am not mentioning the 15 half-brothers to him. Let us now look back to my father's brothers living on the area where my grandfather lived. Is this not crowded, because the land does not expand? Which place can be ploughed by the present generation?

Phungula's solution to impoverishment and proletarianization was not peasant but working class action. Rather than demanding more land, oxen for ploughing, or schemes for increasing rural production, he acknowledged that migrant workers were basically dependent on wage labour and proposed a wage demand of £1 5s per day or £32 10s per month. Armed with these proposals, he approached the African trade unions and political organizations of Durban. He asked Christopher Mbonambi, a leading member of the African National Workers' Federation, a loose coordinating group of African trade unionists which had campaigned around the issue of unemployment insurance, for support for a general strike including all races across industrial divisions for a demand of a minimum wage of at least £1 a

day. This proposal had the popular support of the workers, but Mbonambi told Phungula he was putting forward a revolutionary demand which would be quite impossible to accomplish.<sup>80</sup> As the rumours of proposed action spread through Durban the Divisional Inspector of Labour called in Mbonambi and warned him of the consequences of a general strike. He told Mbonambi to instruct the workers that demands should be put in a 'constitutional' way, industry by industry, and that the strike movement had to be stopped. Mbonambi arranged a large meeting at the Bantu Social Centre at which Phungula was called upon to explain his strategy. The meeting of African workers, which was attended by the Department of Labour officials, the Security Branch, and secretaries of African trade unions, gave Mbonambi a 'nasty time' at the start of the meeting. He explained to the workers how to make wage demands in terms of the existing regulations promulgated in terms of War Measure 145 of 1942 and said it would be impossible to get to £1 from an existing wage of 5s a day; a demand should be made somewhere between. Gradually, despite the popular feeling for a general strike, he won the workers over to his gradualist approach, and the proposed general strike was defeated. Phungula returned to his fellow dock workers, 'those were the people who understood him well, they did not want to understand what we said at the meeting' said Mbonambi later. Although in retreat, Phungula did not change his views. 'He would test out his ideas among the people and when he had the right response nothing would move him from his standpoint.'<sup>81</sup>

Despite opposition from the African trade unionists of the time, Phungula had correctly assessed the mood of the African workers and their desire for mass action to change their conditions. As a dock worker he may well have been aware of the strikes and resistance to colonialism in other African ports from seamen on the coastal routes. In Lourenço Marques there had been radical discontent in 1947 combined with political agitation which produced a series of strikes in the docks and in neighbouring plantations,

which had culminated in an 'abortive uprising' at Lourenço Marques in 1948. There had also been strikes of dockers in Dar es Salaam and a general strike in Zanzibar.<sup>82</sup> The strategy of a general strike having been defeated, the African workers turned towards more nationalistic forms of action. Instead of class action the African workers turned against Indian people; both petty bourgeois shopkeepers and landowners, and Indian workers.

The riots which broke out on 13 January 1949 in the afternoon after an incident between an African youth and an Indian shop assistant were one of the most destructive social upheavals in South African history. The most dominated and repressed section of the South African working class turned against a minority group which possessed urban land and trading rights and preferential treatment in employment. The newly elected National Party government stood back at first from the spectacle of two oppressed groups in struggle among themselves before ordering in police and troops to restore order. In the violence which took place 142 people were killed: 87 Africans, 50 Indians, 4 'others', and 1 White; a large number of people were injured, and considerable amounts of property was destroyed or damaged.<sup>83</sup> African workers housed in compounds, and the togt workers in particular, took a leading part in the violence against Indian people. Easu Laflete, considered by the authorities to be the spokesman for Cato Manor, said in evidence to the Commission of Inquiry which followed, that the worst attackers of Indian property in Cato Manor came from the Point barracks in the dock area through the central area of the town into Booth Road and then on into Cato Manor itself.<sup>84</sup> In the Report of the Commission, the fact that African males were 'herded together' in compounds was considered a contributing factor to the riots. 'Such congregations of men are ready tinder to any spark, and it is clear that the compound-dwellers took an important part in the excesses.'<sup>85</sup> In his evidence to the Commission of Inquiry which followed, Phungula proposed a radical solution to

racial conflict and redirected attention to the role of the state in generating antagonism among racial groups.

My Lord this land of ours is in a state of great confusion, it is a country that has already been steeped in blood ... if we had our way we would tell the Government ... 'you are no longer competent to govern this country, it will be better for you to hand it over to the coloured people'.<sup>86</sup>

Through selective legislation the state had given Indian people privileges over African people whose hearts 'are red because of the encouragement which the Government gives to the Indians to lord it over us'. Finally, however, he succumbed to the mass feelings of the time and said that the Indian people should be repatriated, even though they were only as much foreign as the Whites.

The violence between African and Indian people in Durban was a severe setback to the working class and national movements. The post-war resistance of the working people in the colonial world which took on a mass anti-imperialist form had, under backward petty bourgeois leadership in Natal, turned perversely inward. Leaders such as Champion, who had done his share in stumulating hatred for Indian people, attempted to address the African rioters but were repudiated and even assaulted although under police escort.<sup>87</sup>

The African National Congress issued a statement shortly after the upheaval which accepted that the events constituted a 'race riot', resulting from differential and discriminatory treatment of various racial groups. Described in *any* terms, the riots were catastrophic and dwarfed other violent struggles of the period. In Chicago 15 Whites and 23 Blacks were killed in race riots while the anti-colonial demonstrations in the Gold Coast in 1948 led to the deaths of 29 people.<sup>88</sup> By avoiding mention of the actual relations between Indian and African workers and petty bourgeois

and the manifest points of conflict, the statement tended to reduce the actions of African workers to that of a haphazard and uncontrollable outburst. The government's policy of racial differentiation, it argued,

has rendered the African the football and servant of all which he silently resents. It has given him an accumulation of grievances and a sense of frustration which find expression in unpredictable actions of violence or otherwise, to which no section is immune.<sup>89</sup>

In the later documents setting out a common strategy for both the African National Congress (Natal) and the Natal Indian Congress, united action between Indian and African workers was not mentioned, and the forms of inter-racial solidarity suggested were joint councils. In the uneasy situation following the riots African traders and landlords mobilized rapidly, extended the building of shacks, raised rents, and formed business groups which capitalized on anti-Indian feeling.<sup>90</sup>

The only leader who was able to intervene in the cauldron of hatred which erupted and continued after the riots and direct the African people away from attacking the fellow oppressed and exploited was Zulu Phungula. Although he had not condemned those participating in attacks on Indian workers, he attempted to redirect the violent energy of the migrant workers away from the petty Indian landowners and traders against the employers and the state. As the leader of the Natal Zulu Workers' Union he called a meeting on Sunday, 16 January 1949, to press forward with revolutionary wage demands, which drew some 20,000 African workers before it was dispersed by the police.<sup>91</sup> Despite this setback, Phungula continued in agitating for strike action in support of demands for an immediate doubling of wages or more. Early in April 1949 he called a meeting of sanitation workers employed by the Durban Corporation and said if the employers did not listen to the demands of the workers a general strike would be called. He was brought to court on a charge of calling a meeting without permission,

found guilty, and fined £10 or one month's imprisonment.<sup>92</sup> Later that month he issued a pamphlet as President of the Natal Zulu National Workers' Union which called on all African workers in the Durban area to demand £32 10s a month. If the demand was not met the workers should strike from 1 May. This call met with an immediate response from the docks. On Monday, 2 May 1949, according to press reports, 800 stevedoring workers refused to start work. The strike movement spread to workers in the ship painting, baking and milling, whaling, timber, sugar, and chemical industries. Armed police and armoured cars were called out and the industrial workers were threatened with immediate prosecution in terms of war measures if they did not return to work. The general strike did not have the momentum that Phungula would have wished (he was arrested on the first day) but it was certainly more widespread than the initial newspaper reports described. The strike was strongly criticized by the African trade union movement and by the District Committee of the Communist Party as undermining the African trade unions. The occasion was used to repeat demands for the recognition of these unions. The leaders of the strike 'cannot be described as anything but irresponsible'.

By calling for a stoppage of work on the part of all African workers in Durban, they have not only usurped the authority and function of existing African unions, thereby creating confusion among the workers, but alienated the sympathy of trade union leaders. As the strike has demonstrated, such action can only end in defeats and disillusionment for the workers.

While condemning the leaders the Communist Party acknowledged the underlying discontent of the workers without mentioning the wage demand. 'The fact that the so-called Natal Zulu Workers' Union's call for a strike, irresponsibly led and badly organized though it was, met with some response is a clear indication that the African workers have real grievances, which can be removed not by repression but by doing away with the causes of such

grievances'. By making an appeal for the 'elementary democratic right of collective bargaining' to the government and employers of African workers, the statement avoided the issue of uniting all sections of the working class in Durban around the wage demands which had been supported by hundreds of unorganized workers.

It also attempted to revive hopes in the forlorn campaign to have African trade unions recognized in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act when the issue had been decided against the workers in 1943 and every subsequent action by the National Party Government elected in 1948 confirmed that further political action against the working class was on the agenda. The African trade unions which were so emphatically endorsed were in a stage of advanced decay as the intelligentsia which had taken up their leadership realized there was no possibility of a secure livelihood in the future under an increasingly repressive regime. Far from trying to provide leadership to the African working class and developing fighting demands, the unions were being wound up. Trade unionism had become identified with reformism in the eyes of the migrant workers who took an independent course of action. The strike had not been a success, but neither was it a decisive defeat for the African workers resulting in demoralization. Had it not been smothered by the trade union reformists some time late in 1948 it would have had the chance of much greater success and concentrated the energies of African workers against the employers rather than against the Indian people. The strike, even in its muted form, had also popularized the wage demand of £1 a day, a slogan which became the demand of SACTU in the late 1950s.<sup>94</sup>

Phungula was brought before the Native Commissioner's Court on the first day of the strike for a judicial inquiry in terms of Section 29 (the vagrancy clause) of the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1945. The court was filled with African workers and armed police. Evidence was led that

Phungula had no visible means of support as leader of the Natal Zulu National Workers' Union which did not keep proper books of account and that he had worked only five days in 1948.<sup>95</sup> Phungula said that the people he organized gave him money for food and collections were taken at meetings, and that he had been unemployed for long periods because the employers called him 'Hitler' and would not take him on.<sup>96</sup> After hearing evidence that Phungula had persisted in making 'excessive' wage demands at a time when tensions had not subsided after the riots, the Assistant Bantu Affairs Commissioner, J. J. M. Stander, ordered that he be banished to Ixopo for ten years and not be allowed to return to Durban without the written consent of the Secretary for Native Affairs.<sup>97</sup> The Durban District Committee of the Communist Party protested vigorously against this measure as a threat to the right of all workers to organize freely and withhold their labour and called for its withdrawal.<sup>98</sup> Phungula's banishment was a prelude to a vigorous reassessment of the controls over togt labour and a determination to crush militancy in the harbour area at a time of a virtual collapse of trade union organization among African workers.

#### Influx control, wage struggles, and the labour supply company

During the early 1950s the National Party government enacted a variety of measures to maintain the circulation of African labour between the reserves and wage labour and to provide a basis for 'rural urbanization'. Amendments were made to African labour legislation to encourage a more efficient migrant labour system; labour bureaux were established to direct the supply of labour, and tribal government was strengthened to reinforce controls over the industrial reserve army of labour.<sup>99</sup> Contrary to liberal opinion on the implementation of these wide-ranging measures, employers were not opposed to more controls over the supply of African labour, although there were negotiations and on occasion arguments over their imposition in particular sectors. Labour-intensive industries and services

obviously benefited from a system which encouraged and later forced African workers to return to the reserves after completing a period of service, 'for otherwise the subsidiary means of subsistence would disappear and the labourer would tend to become a permanent resident ... with increased requirements'.<sup>100</sup>

The general principles contained in 'Bantu labour regulations' were phased in through negotiations in the dock area. The stevedoring companies, the municipality, and the departments of state grappled with the problems of maintaining policies which could be in conflict: influx control and a low wage structure. The problem was to ensure unlimited access to a reserve army of labour for employers while implementing a state policy of influx control and regulation of all service contracts. These two policies were not directly contradictory, although there could be short-term conflicts between particular employers and sectors and the overall program of systematic controls which required greater sophistication in their operation and even new administrative institutions. The immediate problem of the state in the post-riot situation in Durban was to limit the number of unemployed workseekers who could be drawn into radical political and industrial action. Investigations were made by officials of the Native Administration Department into the number of workless African people in the Durban area and wide publicity was given to the figure of 10,000 'surplus' Africans.<sup>101</sup> On 8 July 1949 it was decided to take decisive action: the Durban City Council decided to enforce strictly the provisions of Proclamation 39 of 1940 which prohibited entry of African workseekers into the urban area if there was already full employment and for the removal of all unemployed Africans.<sup>102</sup> The implementation of influx control had an immediate effect on African workseekers pouring in from the rural areas. The Native Commissioner for Natal reported that many Africans could not find the work they wanted to do and were forced to accept work at lower wages; in this sense the regulations were serving

the function of redirecting labour and depressing wages. The Native Commissioner for Durban reported that the restrictions had resulted in the reduction of the estimated surplus of African workers in Durban from 10,000 to 6,000.<sup>103</sup>

While these restrictions were implemented with the general consent of employers through their representative organizations, the effects of a restricted and directed labour supply affected certain groups of employers more than others. The employers of togt labour were most directly affected and their position was further aggravated by the City Council's policy of refusing to issue any further togt licences until more accommodation was provided by the employers. Some anxious negotiations and an appeal to the Minister of Native Affairs followed, resulting in a temporary administrative suspension of part of the regulations restricting the issue of togt licences to the amount of suitable accommodation available, and the threat to the supply of togt labour was removed. As a quid pro quo the stevedoring employers agreed to extend the existing accommodation to provide for 1,500 labourers at their own expense. When the national system of labour bureaux was brought into operation, further concessions were granted to togt employers to avoid having to register service contracts every day. Stevedoring employers were also exempted from having to contribute to the Unemployment Insurance Fund.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the banishment of Phungula and the implementation of influx and other labour controls, strikes continued in the dock area. Railway workers came out on strike for short periods in 1950 and 1951. Painters and chippers demanded 15s a day in a strike which started on 2 June 1952 and lasted for over fifteen days.<sup>105</sup> As the African trade unions of the 1940s disintegrated in a period of declining wages and official repression, working class action was driven underground and led by politically active workers such as Fanyana Majosi in the dock area.<sup>106</sup> The most determined

thrust of working class action in the docks came in the period between 1954 and 1959. The stevedoring togt workers came out on strike on 1 July 1954 with a demand for 4s. 9d a day wage increase which would have brought their wages up to 15s. This strike, in which the painters and chippers joined, was well organized by the workers with pickets throughout the harbour area who acted against scab labour.<sup>107</sup> After some offers of small wage increases, S.D. Mentz, the Chairman of the Central Native Labour Board was brought from Pretoria to settle the strike. He addressed the strikers with armed police standing by, told them to appoint spokesmen, and threatened to have them replaced unless they acted on his advice. 'Like an indomitable army, however, the strikers faced Mr. Mentz and an armed police force, refusing to return to work or to appoint a deputation and expose their leadership.' The strikers used the occasion to demand the return of Zulu Phungula:

When we are speaking to our employers the Government interferes. The man we want back to speak for us has been taken away. We are still looking for him.

Faced with the determined opposition of the strikers, the company served notices on the workers either to go back to work within 24 hours or be charged with trespass. This was a new tactic, and combined with an offer of further negotiations, was sufficient to break the strike. The workers returned without illusions about the possibility of increases being made without pressure from the workers.

We can barely exist on our present wages and have nothing left over to send our wives and children. Only a substantial increase will save our families from starvation. We will return to work only for the purpose of keeping a roof over our heads, and until we are better organized, but we will strike again and again if we do not get more money. We strike not to make trouble, but because we must live.

The strike which demonstrated the workers' contempt for the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act which was being used to eliminate trade

union organization among African workers received the unqualified support of political movements and from the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions. The Congress of Democrats statement declared: 'A victory for the dock workers is a victory for the entire working class of South Africa'. As promised, negotiations began on 8 July between the Central Native Labour Board, executives of Durban stevedoring companies, and nine spokesmen for the togt stevedores.<sup>108</sup> The stevedoring companies finally conceded an increase of 1s 3d per day with a variety of smaller increments. Mentz recommended the establishment of a permanent labour force on a weekly or monthly basis, 'the number of men to be employed based on the lowest number of men employed during any week over the past year'.<sup>109</sup> Such a system would not eliminate the necessity for casual labour but would reduce the reliance of the stevedoring trade on this form of labour and a central core of workers would be employed who would be under direct contractual obligation to the employer. Further negotiations with the Central Native Labour Board followed in 1954 and 1956 in which the workers were assisted by Fanyana Majosi (who had been dismissed from employment in the docks) and Stephen Dhlamini of SACTU.

In the late 1950s the conflict between dock employers and the state which had been temporarily resolved in 1950 flared up again. In November 1957 the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, announced that most of the stevedoring compounds at the Point dock area would have to go and that only 2,000 African stevedores would be allowed in that area.<sup>110</sup> Employers of labour in the dock area protested that there would be a serious decline in the efficiency of work at the harbour if the workers were housed at Kwa Mashu to the north of Durban, that they would possibly refuse to work overtime because of the long hours which they would be away from their homes, and that there was a possibility that Durban would be bypassed by ships which would be diverted to Lourenço Marques. The Stevedores' Association which housed 1,520 workers submitted a memorandum

to the Government pointing out the 'serious repercussions' which could follow if their compounds had to be demolished.<sup>111</sup> While the future of togt labour was being discussed by officials, the workers responded to the call of the African National Congress for a three-day stay-at-home.

The employers, local authorities, state departments, and the police reacted vigorously to the threat of mass strike action. A meeting was called by the local Native Commissioner of all African foremen ('indunas and boss-boys') which was addressed by the Chief of Police, the head of the Durban City Council Native Administration Department, and by A.W.G. Champion (no longer president of the Natal African National Congress). This meeting 'received a most hostile reception from those present for suggesting that all workers should go to work on these three days'. The workers wanted a response to the demand of £1 a day put forward by SACTU and the Congress Alliance, and reportedly said they would not work on the three days of April 14, 15 and 16. The Natal Mercury printed a message from the Zulu Paramount Chief on the front page calling on African workers not to take part in the strike.<sup>112</sup> The stay-at-home in April 1958 had mixed success (it was described by the New Age as 'on the whole a failure') and was called off by the African National Congress. In Durban the strike was 30-40 per cent effective, many factories closed completely and others carried on with considerable absenteeism, the market was deserted, and Indian shops were closed. The dock workers responded to the strike call and many left the dock area altogether. Those who remained were forced out of the privately owned compounds by the police but struck at work and demanded £1 a day. The police and Department of Labour officials 'intimidated and coerced the workers to return' and many arrests were made but these workers refused to do any overtime during the three days of the campaign. When those who had left the dock area returned the workers unanimously decided not to work overtime unless they were paid £1 a day.<sup>113</sup> Harbour congestion resulted from the three-day stay-

at-home and was aggravated further by the tactic of banning overtime as a bargaining lever. The standard amount of overtime was four hours, but from Monday, 14 April 1958, the first day of the stay-at-home, the workers refused to work after 5 p.m. On the Sunday after the overtime ban had begun the workers again came out on strike and demanded £1 a day. Negotiations between the workers and employers followed and the togt workers gained an increase of 1s 6d per day with improved conditions of overtime and better Sunday wages.<sup>114</sup> After this pay increase was announced 2,000 railway workers gathered outside the offices of the Port Goods Superintendent demanding increases, and negotiations were started. Pressure on the employers was increased on Sunday, 27 May, when no workers reported for work. An emergency meeting was held between stevedoring employers and the Divisional Inspector of Labour and negotiations continued between the workers and employers. A settlement was reached on Sunday at 11 a.m. providing for a basic wage of 14s per day and other increases, and the workers returned to work.<sup>115</sup> The tactical weapon of boycotting overtime and Sunday work (both theoretically voluntary) proved an extremely successful technique of increasing pressure on employers without jeopardizing the position of the workers housed in the compounds. Throughout the period of the overtime ban severe congestion resulted in the docks; on Sunday, 27 May, there were over 25 ships lying idle in the port.

The disruption brought about by strike action and prohibition of overtime coupled with the state policy of tighter control over surplus labour, brought together officials and employers to consider measures to control the workers more effectively. The Natal Employers' Association convened a meeting of the employers, the Department of Labour, the Department of Native Administration, and municipal officials, on 27 November 1958. The chairman of the meeting, a stevedoring employer, said the meeting had been called to extend controls over stevedoring labour and to eliminate

the tigt labour system; two changes which were intimately related given the relatively 'free' form of contract in day labour. A centrally administered compound system had been accepted by the Durban Stevedores' Association which controlled the large compounds, as an answer to the 'complete lack of discipline over the tigt labour force'. The new system would be introduced by the formation of a separate non-profit-making company which would have, as its directors, nominees of each of the existing stevedoring companies in Durban. This company would then control all the barracks then owned by the various companies and all employers would draw on the labour of the monopoly labour supply company. The employers' response to working class militancy in the dock area was the concentration of controls in one central institution and the elimination of competition for labour. While previously a labourer out of favour with one company could find employment at another company, with the new system of labour control 'undesirable' labour would be eliminated from employment by the employers and from the area by the state.<sup>116</sup>

Since 1949 there had existed in legislation provision for the centralized control over African labour supply by employers<sup>117</sup> but, given the conflicts over labour supply in the 1950s, the approval of the Department of Native Administration was essential to the new plan. The Assistant Secretary of the national Department of Native Affairs, H.H.L. Smuts, outlined the policy of the government to the meeting. He felt that although there was a great amount of work to be done in the 'cleaning up' of Durban he could see 'no objection whatsoever' to the accommodation being controlled by a central labour supply company. Conflicts between the employers and the state would be resolved by a division of administration: the labour supply company would exercise complete discipline over the workers, and the only aspect not controlled by it would be the actual authorization of the worker to be in the urban area which would remain

with the local authority. The other officials were not unexpectedly all in favour of the central supply company, although the Divisional Inspector of Labour correctly forecast trouble in the transition from togt to a monthly contract system of employment. He optimistically foresaw that the new form of control would permit 'weeding out troublemakers' in a short time and 'peace in the industry for the rest of your lives'. Such were the hopes and aspirations of the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company.<sup>118</sup>

As foreseen, there were severe difficulties in changing the structure of employment in the stevedoring trade to contract labour. The Company itself was only successfully inaugurated after the most severe resistance of the workers had been broken by employer action fully supported by the state. The first step towards its construction were measures designed to incorporate indunas more effectively into the structure of authority of the stevedoring companies.<sup>119</sup> Previously, it would appear that the indunas had some independent position in being partly responsible for recruiting and marshalling workers in particular gangs for which they received a bonus from employers and a cash payment from workers. In a centrally administered compound system these tasks were removed from them and performed by the labour supply company, and the indunas' tasks were transformed into that of sergeant-majors of the company. The indunas were compensated for this change of status by a substantial wage increase. This led to further industrial action by togt workers; the immediate cause being the differential introduced between the basic wages of indunas and labourers. The issue came to a head after the Wage Board had investigated the trade for the first time in 1958. The local committee of SACTU, having given evidence that some workers were without employment for weeks, had suggested that the workers should be paid weekly, and had demanded a considerable increase in the existing daily rate: R2.50 for labourers, R2.70 for gangway-men/winchmen, and R3.00 for indunas.<sup>120</sup> The workers had looked to

the Wage Board for relief, but the Wage Determination 183 which resulted from the investigation provided no wage increase for labourers, laid down differential rates for winchmen and gangwaymen, and had prescribed large increases for indunas. The strike broke out on 24 February when it became known there would be no increase for labourers and a 4s increase for indunas. Two stevedoring labourers were arrested on a charge of assaulting an induna in a compound, and the workers demanded a pay increase proportionate to that granted to the indunas.<sup>121</sup> Rather than negotiate with the workers, the employers, the Department of Labour and the police went ahead with the plan to force the labour supply company on the workers. All the strikers were dismissed and ordered to leave the premises of the stevedoring company's compounds. A strong detachment of police arrived at the compounds, an induna called upon the workers to disperse, and the police made a baton charge and attacked those in the immediate vicinity. Some thirty minutes after the attack at least four seriously injured workers were still lying on the ground in pools of blood, and 87 workers were arrested. These workers were defended by lawyers briefed by SACTU, although some pleaded guilty of trespass and were fined £5 with the alternative of 25 days imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>122</sup> The companies took advantage of the defeated strike and the pleas of workers for re-employment to introduce the labour supply company, and the majority of the strikers, together with other workers, were re-engaged on a permanent basis. The change was initially seen by SACTU as an advance in the conditions of employment. 'Togt labour has long been a source of friction between the workers and employers, and the introduction of a weekly-paid permanent labour force is a definite gain by the workers'. Despite the low wage offered (£3 per week) the introduction of permanent employment seemed to offer the basis for union organization. 'With the establishment of a permanent labour force it is now possible to organize the workers into a union and we hope that the employers will negotiate with this union and

avoid any further trouble in the docks.'<sup>123</sup> But the men objected to the new wage system on the grounds that they could earn more under the previous system if work were available throughout the week (a potential of 84s per week) as opposed to the 60s weekly wage. Again they demanded increased wages and refused to work overtime. A severe crisis resulted as the ships were unable to be unloaded and labour discipline in the dock area was being threatened with impossible strategic implications. The workers complained about the intensification of labour in the docks as a result of the ending of the togt labour system.

The employers want to kill us with overtime. In the past we used to take off a day or two whenever we felt tired, but now that we are employed on a weekly basis we could not do this. We feel that more workers should be employed by the stevedoring companies and at the same time we should be paid a decent wage for the hard work we do.<sup>124</sup>

The employers responded by dismissing the entire labour force and recruiting new workers from Zululand to take their places. Despite the congestion in the harbour which resulted and a high accident rate suffered by the inexperienced workers who replaced those who were dismissed, the successful operation of the labour supply company was secured. The pattern of mass discipline established by employers and the state during the war was again enforced to break down the workers' resistance to a system which they correctly saw as dramatically increasing their employers' control over their labour-time.

Far from decasualization strengthening the position of the workers and even providing the basis for open trade unionism, the transition from daily to weekly paid labour was the final stage in the employers' offensive against independent working class action during the 1950s in the docks.

## Conclusions

The social actions of the Durban dock workers throws some light on the debate on the relative consciousness of a particular group of migrant workers and on their level of proletarianization. Their consciousness was evident both in the statements of their leadership which came up from the ranks and their actions and demands. For the overwhelming mass of African workers during this period agricultural production in the reserves became insignificant and the statements and wage demands of the workers were part of a general struggle to have their rights as proletarians acknowledged. As a leader, Zulu Phungula was possibly unique in being able to link effectively the issue of rural impoverishment and working class struggle in the cities. No other leader of the same calibre can be found in the ranks of African workers during this time. Phungula was a revolutionary worker who was prepared to defy all existing views of the established leadership of the trade unions and working class political organizations as well as an increasingly repressive state. He was able to put his finger on the reformist confusions of the trade unions and provide a clear alternative. Before the Industrial Legislation Commission he repudiated the political rule over the African working class: 'Well insofar as we are concerned, we are being treated as a burnt out match by the European, a match which has not been used is of considerably more use than a burnt out match.'<sup>125</sup> In simple language he was able to portray the inseparable connection between national oppression and the exploitation of the working class. In particular he was able to repudiate the racist denigration of the African working people by their political rulers: 'We are treated as chattels, as people with no reasoning power, but they are wrong.'<sup>126</sup> His development as a worker-intellectual and leader, owing little to the established paths of learning in bourgeois education, was a living contradiction to the view that African workers were incapable of taking a dominant part in ruling a revolutionary South Africa.

Phungula was able to avoid the worse aspects of labour organization which historically had been evident in African trade unions (despite his inability to keep proper financial records); the bureaucratization of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union with its political confusions and financial excesses, and the dependency of the African trade unions of the war period on state benevolence. Despite being described as a 'one man show' by African trade unionists of the time, he was able to articulate the ideology and demands of the migrant workers while avoiding all forms of petty-bourgeois personality cult (as can readily be seen in contrast to the 'great leader' style of A.W.G. Champion).

But despite these enormous achievements Phungula was not a simple heroic figure. At times he alternated between a firm working class position and a populism which bordered on demagogic nationalist appeal, particularly when he did not make clear his repudiation of action against Indian people. In general he drew on national resistance of the African people to develop a view of an African proletariat and to link traditional struggles to those in production. His nationalism appears to be an antidote to the reformism of the working class leadership. When he returned to Durban in 1948 he formed the Natal Zulu Workers' Union in contrast to the reformist African trade unions, to represent the aspirations of the radical migrant workers. This tendency was evident in the earlier period but was overcome by a desire to build the national unity of the dock workers on the basis of fighting demands. But with the Communist Party emphasis on broad democratic demands in the late 1940s rather than clearly class-based strategies, national resistance around class demands seems to have been the alternative presented by Phungula. He made a conscious break with the Communist Party about a week before the anti-Indian violence broke out and afterwards he even argued that Africans rejected communism and wanted to 'belong to the Government, but it is the Government which

ignores us and pushes us down into the mud'.<sup>127</sup> In response, the Communist Party attacked his leadership but did defend him in court.

The numerous strikes of the 1950s showed that Phungula and leading workers had been able to develop a form of underground organization in strike committees. The workers were able to get their views into newspapers like New Age without the leaders being victimized. As SACTU developed rapidly in Natal in the late 1950s, the dock workers' organization was strengthened. But the SACTU leadership seems to have had illusions in the possibility of open trade union organization even as late as 1959 when all indications were that the form of decasualization forced on the workers had been aimed at destroying their resistance. Far from decasualization in itself making trade union organization and negotiations possible, as was suggested, the need for underground organization was more necessary than ever. Any further strike action by the workers was met by mass dismissals and purges of the workers' ranks. During the mass stay-at-home after Sharpeville, the Durban dockers were disorganized and unresponsive in comparison to workers in Cape Town.

While the legislation on African labour supply provided the general context in which the employers and the state acted to crush the unity of the workers and extend the system of contract labour, the 'Bantu regulations' were implemented and modified to meet the particular conditions of working class struggle. The means by which migrant labour was reinforced by the action of employers and the state, from the dock strike of 1942 until the culmination of collective capitalist reaction in 1959 in the form of the labour supply company, helps to illuminate the processes by which ideological and physical forms of control over the black working class as a whole were enforced. During this period 'tribal' government, which has a vested interest in the continuation of the contract migrant system, was strengthened

and the regulations which reinforced migrant workers' dependence on land in the reserves (such as the 'one-man-one-lot' system) meant proletarianization was accompanied by 'rural urbanization'.

After the banishment of Phungula the dock workers' resistance took a leaderless form, not because of the primitiveness of their struggle (the first recorded collective action of dock workers took place in 1875 and subsequent developments showed that dock workers were prepared to lay down a bedrock of informal organization during periods of intense repression), but because of their relatively advanced nature and experience. These organizational forms were able to survive longer among these workers than among those with more formal methods of organization. This is not to glorify the dock workers as a heroic group of workers who set the pace in industrial struggles but to argue that the forms of control which forced organization 'underground' in the 1950s made them more capable of sustaining social action. The evidence tends to contradict those who would argue that compounds are total institutions and make impossible collective action among African workers. The concentration of workers in increasingly centralized and controlled barracks both facilitates greater communication among workers and more effective control over these workers when on strike.

The coordination between employers and the state changed over time in response to the different objectives at hand; the development of 'tribal' governments and controls over African workers in urban areas on the one hand, and increasing the rate of exploitation (increasing the pace at which workers were loading and unloading cargo in the main port of South Africa) on the other. While the workers were advancing in social action and in strategy, it is also demonstrably true that employers and the state were learning from the struggle of the workers in Durban and internationally. The issues were not resolved to the point where no further contradictions within the

system of control were possible; it was not as though there is an undifferentiated and unrelentingly successful form of repression despite the tremendous powers wielded by capital. But it was certainly true that new forms of organization would be required by the dock workers.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Palmer (1930) and Daily News, 4 April 1931. Although it has not been possible to develop this point in depth here, the use of physical controls against sections of the African working class who are seen to be threatening the livelihood of urban African workers has formed a persistent thread of argument by liberals in South Africa.
2. Simons (1969): 616
3. Woddis (1960): 252
4. Natal Mercury, 19 March 1942
5. Basner (1946): 13; Kahn (1949): 285, and Senate Debates, 1942, Column 1583. Convictions in terms of the pass laws dropped from 105,304 in 1941 to 53,866 in 1943.
6. Natal Mercury, 12 November 1941
7. Described in Stein (1979)
8. CPSA (1936): 19-20. The difference between the two forms of political rule was made originally in Dimitrov's writings on fascism and in the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International.
9. Brookes (1967) implies a unilinear development in the CPSA from class struggle to national liberation during the important war period. The actual history of party policy was certainly more complex as the previous chapters have shown, and during the Second World War within the general demands for democratic rights there were a number of tendencies. J.B. Marks, for instance, supported the organization of an African trade union movement, while CPSA policy aimed at building a broad multi-racial trade union movement. Brookes (1967): 104
10. R.H. Smith, 1950, Labour Resources of Natal, Oxford University Press, and John R. Burrows, 1959, The Population and Labour Resources of Natal, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal.
11. 1936 Census, UG 12/1942, p.80
12. *Ibid.*, xiii, Table 7
13. Harold Wolpe, November 1972, 'Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa: From segregation to apartheid', Economy and Society, 1(4) pp. 425-456.
14. *Ibid.*, p.425
15. Report of Native Affairs Commission, 1939-40, UG 42/1941, p. 16. The Native Affairs Commission argued that the African workers living in urban areas were being undercut by 'subsidized' migrant labour from the reserves. This called for tighter influx control.

16. Smith (1950), p.65
17. The Call, April 1940, 1(4)
18. Report of the Inter-Departmental Commission on the Social, Health, and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives, 1942, para. 208 and 209.
19. Daily News, 13 May 1949. Ixopo was also the home district of another unorthodox war-time leader of the African working people, James Sofasonke Mpanza, who led the struggle of squatters in Orlando, Johannesburg. Mpanza successfully resisted being banished from Orlando to Ixopo, a course of action which was also taken by the state against Phungula. Ixopo was also the final setting for Alan Paton's Cry the beloved country. Whether there is a thread linking these coincidental facts it is impossible to say. See Simons (1968): 56, for a discussion of Mpanza's legal arguments against banishment.
20. Monthly Labour Review, September 1943. Wartime labour control in the Union of South Africa, 57(3) pp. 473-483.
21. Wage Report No 460, para. 36 and 59.
22. Report of the General Manager of the Railway and Harbours for the Year Ending 31 March 1940, UG 41/1940. One harbour ton equals 2,000 lb.
23. This and subsequent references come from records of the Department of Labour held in the Transvaal Archives. I had permission from the Minister of National Education to consult these files, but this permission was later withdrawn without reasons being given. File 1496, Controller of Industrial Manpower, Strike: Stevedoring, Durban.
24. Meeting held at Native Commissioner's Office, Durban, 11 March 1942, File 1496, and Natal Mercury, 19 August 1941, p.10.
25. Notes of meeting held in the Government Buildings, Durban, on Tuesday, 19 August 1941, in connection with the Native togt labour strike at the Point, File 1496, and Report of Divisional Inspector to the Controller of Industrial Manpower, 18 August 1941, File 1496.
26. Ivan Walker was later joint author with Ben Weinbren of 2,000 Casualties, a book on trade unionism in South Africa which does not mention the struggle of the Durban dock workers despite first hand experience.
27. Notes of meeting held in the Government Buildings ... File 1496.
28. These conditions were published in the form of a proclamation GN 1163, 1941.
29. Monthly Labour Review (September 1943) gives a summary of these powers and other war-time emergency measures affecting workers.

30. The Guardian (editorial), 28 August 1941. Inkundla responded more affirmatively in an article 'Good news for workers', 5 August 1941, and asked the question 'What would happen if all the Natives in Durban would follow the same lead?' The radical Call wrote that the emergency regulations raised the spectre of a fascist order in South Africa.
31. There is some confusion on this point, but during the Wage Board investigation preceding Wage Determination No 76 it was undoubtedly true that the stevedoring employers had offered to pay 9d an hour; in equivalent terms 6s per day. During the early negotiations on 17 August 1941 the employers, who were mainly concerned to get the state to legislate wages rather than be forced to grant increases, may well have said they would pay 8s or any wage the government decided upon.
32. Meeting held at Native Commissioner's Office, Durban, 11 March 1942, p.2.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Official translation of article in Zulu appearing in Inkululeko, August 1942, File 1496.
35. The Guardian, 30 July 1942 and 6 August 1942.
36. CPSA, 1944, Communists in conference, p.5. See also Brookes (1967): 58. This policy was established in previous years. Inkululeko, the organ of the CPSA, reported approvingly on 27 March 1943 that iron and steel workers were instructed to make every effort 'to see that no unnecessary stoppages of work took place'. See also Simms (1969): 555-6.
37. Natal Mercury, 5 and 6 August 1942
38. The Guardian, 13 August 1942. As late as 18 August a correspondent of Inkululeko reported the docks 'as quiet as Sunday'. There was widespread protest against War Measure 86 of 1942 from the left trade unions and some Labour Party MPs. The Guardian, 27 August 1942.
39. The Guardian, 3 September 1942 and 17 September 1942. The relative liberalism of the authorities at this point has to be seen in conjunction with the relaxation of the administration of the pass laws, and the statement by Madeley that African trade unions would be recognized. This liberalization period died with the onslaught of War Measure 145 of 1943.
40. Willie Kumalo, who accompanied Phungula during negotiations, had, however, previously mentioned that he earned a 6d bonus for operating a winch while Coloured and White workers earned £1 a day for doing

the same work. This statement was heavily underscored by the Department of Labour officials but wage differentials were not demanded by the workers as a whole and Kumalo's arguments have to be seen in the context of his stressing the collective skills of the stevedoring dock workers.

41. Abel M.S. Mhlongo to Divisional Inspector of Labour, Durban, 10 September 1942, File 1496.
42. Meeting with representatives of stevedoring togt labourers at Durban on Friday, 20 November 1942, p.1.
43. Meeting, 20 November 1942. There was no letter in the file to give the precise level of the wage demands, but in speaking of these demands the Deputy General Manager of the Railways wrote as follows: 'The wages they asked to be paid were very high and we are sure that neither Phungula nor Sumongo (confusion for Mhlongo) ever really expected that such high rates of pay would be granted to non-European workers. Some of the rates mentioned by Phungula and (Mhlongo) are higher than those paid to skilled European workers'. pp. 1-2.
44. House of Assembly Debates, 29 February 1943, Col. 579-582. I am indebted to Baruch Hirson for sources on the strikes preceding the proclamation of War Measure 145 of 1942. For a list of strikes in Natal, 1882-1946 (which does not specify the industry and exact dates and omits the Dunlop strike, but is otherwise very useful), see H.G. Ringrose (1949?), 'A history and description of trade unions in Natal', Cyclostyled. The version of this work published in the Natal Regional Survey leaves out many of the statistical and other tables.
45. Ibid.
46. War Measure: Settlement of Labour Disputes, 318 of 1942 (War Measure 145 of 1942) amended by Proclamation 210 of 1944 (War Measure 81 of 1944), Proclamation 202 of 1944 (War Measure 82 of 1944) and Section 3 of Act 18 of 1948.
47. Simons (1969): 557
48. Ibid.: 555
49. Stein (1979) deals with the 1942 strike wave and argues that the workers in metal and mining industries particularly were held back from strike action by promises of wage reform. For the rapid increase in African wages during this period see Steenkamp (1963).
50. Information on the Dunlop strike from M.P. Naicker, interview 12 April 1976.

51. Department of Economics (University of Natal), 1950, The African Factory Worker, Oxford University Press, Appendix III, p.213.
52. Inkululeko, 11 April 1943, 'Union leader deported'.
53. Neither during nor after the war did this union lead the struggles of the dock workers in Durban. The first meeting did, however, protest against the action of the state in banishing Phungula. The Guardian, 8 April 1943 and Inkululeko, 11 April 1943. For a description of the propaganda work of the union see Inkululeko, 11 April 1943, 8 July 1944, 16 May 1945. For a discussion of the turmoil in the Natal branch of the African National Congress during the war see Walshe (1970): 393-5.
54. Ringrose (1949?) reported that 'as far as Natal is concerned at any rate, the presence of political influences among Native trade unions is not as serious as is sometimes alleged', and 'as far as Indian unions are concerned, the grouping of a number of them in offices near the headquarters of the Natal Indian Congress does perhaps suggest some form of affinity, but it is easy to overrate this suggestion', p. 106.
55. For a description of the 1946 campaign and the rise of the 'radicals' in the South African Indian Congress see E. Pahad, July 1972, 'The Development of Indian Political Movements in South Africa, 1924-1946' (Ph.D., Sussex, 1972).
56. Commissions were held investigating the 'penetration' of Indian landowners into 'White' areas and official action against Indian people culminated in the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill of 1946. Both Pahad (July 1972) and Frene Ginwala, 'Class Consciousness and Control: Indian South Africans 1860-1946' (Ph.D., Oxford, 1974), deal with these events in some detail, but in neither is there an analysis of the class alignments within the Indian political movements nor accounts of the attempts during the war years to develop united action between Indian and African workers. Ginwala does, however, bring out the relationship of Mahatma Gandhi to Indian traders and his reluctance to endorse the revolt of Indian workers against indentured labour in 1913. Pahad has argued that the struggle against control over Indian people owning land was a campaign involving all classes as many Indian workers owned land and the Indian people as a whole were desperately overcrowded.
57. Natal Mercury, 2 September 1944.
58. Department of Economics (University of Natal), 1952: The Durban Housing Survey, University of Natal Press, pp.344-345.
59. See the following investigations in the Report of the Witwatersrand Mine Natives Wages Commission, UG 21/1944, especially paras. 114-238, The Native Reserves and their Place in the Economy of South

- Africa, Report No.9, Social and Economic Planning Council, UG 32/1946, and the Report of Native Laws Commission, 1946-48, UG 28/1948. These investigations are related to the level of proletarianization during the war years in Dan O'Meara, July 1975, 'The 1946 African Mine Workers' Strike and the Political Economy of South Africa', The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, XIII (2): 146-173.
60. UG 21/1944, para.220. The same arguments apply to workers in those sectors of employment avoided by settled urban workers, e.g. the stevedoring trade.
  61. Report of the Department of Native Affairs for 1944/45, UG 44/1946, p.116.
  62. Report of the Department of Native Affairs for 1945/47, UG 14/1948, p.24.
  63. Figures on maize production in selected areas provide evidence for the collapse of subsistence agriculture in certain districts where production had formerly been quite high in per capita terms, e.g. Polela and Ubombo.
  64. Mayor's Minute, Durban, 1944, Native Administration Department, p.91.
  65. The Guardian, 22 June 1944, 8(18): 6.
  66. Durban City Council, November 1947, Memorandum for Judicial Commission on Native Affairs in Durban, Annexure C to Chapter VII.
  67. Quotations from Durban City Council, *ibid.*, para.29.
  68. See on this subject Margaret Ballinger, October 1944, Industry versus Agriculture; the problem of Native labour, South African Industry and Trade Review, 40(10): 35T-41T.
  69. Ilanga lase Natal, 14 February 1948.
  70. Pahad (July 1972): 216
  71. The interests of the African and Indian trading class were in many ways sharply in conflict. Champion and other traders gave evidence to the Rural Dealers' Licensing Inquiry Committee in 1941 to the effect that preference should be given to African applicants in African areas. Indian taxis serving in Africa areas should be withdrawn. Ilanga lase Natal, 6 December 1941.
  72. Vilikazi, A., January 1958, Zulu social structure and its dynamics today, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Natal, p.228.

73. Ukubamisana, June 1946, 1(1). The principal cooperative, Umgungundlovu in Pietermaritzburg, had a turnover of £7,350 7s 6d and a gross profit of £1,497 13s 11d in 1946. Maydon Wharf cooperative, consisting mainly of migrant workers in compounds, had 35 members and had accumulated £35 14s 7½d, showing the capacity for organized action by migrants. Ukubamisana, August 1946. When the cooperative movement collapsed the stores reverted to private ownership.
74. Huss developed his views within the context of Papal Encyclicals and attempted to break the hold of the ICU on the masses in Natal by stressing hard work, rural development ('People's Banks'), and use of Africanist slogans. Vilikazi limits his analysis of the cooperative movement to the distrust created by 'its too obvious Catholic leadership'. Vilikazi (1958): 228.
75. Ringrose (1949?): 104 and 115. The five unions affiliated to the Natal Federation of African Trade Unions were the African General Labourers' Union, the African Building Workers' Union, the African Municipal Employees' Union, the Natal Iron and Steel Workers' Union, and the Natal African Hospital Workers' Union. Two of these unions had originally been formed by members of the Communist Party. By 1948 two of these unions had gone out of existence.
76. Ilanga lase Natal, 12 June 1948
77. The Guardian, 17 June 1948: 6. No mention was made during this strike of the South African Railways and Harbour Workers' Union which had 2,700 members in 1948.
78. Some Durban trade unionists state he had returned clandestinely on several occasions during his banishment to keep in contact with the workers' movement. Information from Baruch Hirson.
79. Dock Workers' Union, Report of our workers in Natal, 20 September 1948. File 1496. The address on this report was that of the Communist Party in Durban.
80. These extraordinary events are not mentioned in Ilanga, whose editor may have been restricted in his report of the issue. The events are, however, corroborated by other African trade unionists of the time.
81. These are Christopher Mbonambi's views on Phungula.
82. Eduardo Mondlane, 1969, The Struggle for Mozambique, Penguin African Library, p. 115, and John Iliffe, 1970, 'A history of the dockworkers of Dar es Salaam', Tanzania Notes and Records, 71, pp. 131-134.

83. Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the riots of Durban, UG 36/1949, pp.4-5.
84. Judicial Commission appointed to enquire into the Durban riots, 1949, Transcript of evidence, Volume 1, p.159.
85. UG 36/1949, p.20.
86. Judicial Commission (1949), Volume 1, p.169.
87. Ibid., p.53.
88. These comparisons were made by Mary Benson, 1966, The struggle for a birthright, Penguin African Library, p.124.
89. Statement on the Durban riots, by the Working Committee of the ANC, signed by Dr. A.B. Xuma, 20 January 1949. Published in Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter (eds.) 1973, From Protest to Challenge, Volume 2, Hope and Challenge 1935-1952, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, pp.286-7.
90. L.K. Ladlau, December 1975, The Cato Manor Riots 1959-1960, MA Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, describes the 1949 riots and their aftermath.
91. Minutes of Evidence, Industrial Legislation Commission, 1949, p.2956.
92. Ilanga lase Natal, 14 May 1949. The editor had warned African workers in April that employers considered the wage demand 'absurd' and that if the demands were conceded many companies would have to close down. - Ilanga lase Natal, 2 April 1949
93. Natal Mercury, 3 May 1949
94. The Guardian, 12 May 1949, p.3, and Natal Mercury, 3, 4, and 5 May 1949. The strike was one of the few occasions in which a coordinated campaign around immediate industrial issues had been attempted.
95. Natal Mercury, 3 May 1949 and 7 May 1949. Phungula was defended by Roley Arenstein, a leading member of the Communist Party.
96. Natal Mercury, 14 May 1949
97. Ilanga lase Natal, 21 May 1949, and Natal Mercury, 17 August 1950.
98. The Guardian, 26 May 1949
99. There was a decisive increase in pressures for the retention and extension of the migrant labour system in the 1950s. See particularly Martin Legassick, October 1974, 'Legislation, ideology, and economy in post-1948 South Africa', Journal of Southern African Studies, 1(1), pp.5-35.

100. This quotation is taken from the Lansdown Commission, UG 21/1944, para. 309 and describes how the mining industry benefits from the migrant labour system. The argument also applies with considerable force to labour-intensive services and industries such as hotels, docks, civil engineering, and construction, which employ almost exclusively migrant labour.
101. See Ilanga lase Natal, editorial comments, 23 July 1949.
102. See Mayor's Minute, Durban, 1949, Native Administration Department, p.132, and Natal Employers' Association, 7th Annual Report, 1949/50, p.19.
103. Report of the Department of Native Affairs, 1950, UG 61/1951, p.44.
104. Natal Employers' Association, 7th Annual Report, 1949/50, p.19.
105. The Clarion, 12 June 1952
106. There is a short profile of Majosi in New Age, 29 October 1959.
107. Daily News, 1 July 1954
108. Ibid., 5 July 1954, Advance, 15 July 1954, and Daily News, 8 July 1954.
109. Daily News, 9 July 1954.
110. Ibid., 21 November 1957
111. do., 22 November 1957
112. New Age, 17 April 1958: 1 and 3, which also reported that the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Durban City Corporation, and the police used 'every possible intimidation' to get workers not to participate in the political strike.
113. Ibid., 24 April 1958: 5
114. Daily News, 21 April 1958
115. New Age, 1 May 1959: 1 and 5
116. Minutes of a meeting ... Durban, 27 November 1958. File 1496.
117. Important amendments to the Native Labour Regulations Act (No 15 of 1911) provided in Act No 56 of 1949 for the formation, registration, and control of groups of employers recruiting labour in agriculture and enabled the Minister to declare African workers in industries other than mines to be employed on the same basis as those employed on mines and works, Official Year Book, 25, 1949, p.503.
118. Minutes (27 November 1958), p.6.
119. Indunas are African foremen; the language of tribalism has been

incorporated into South African industrial relations. Management has embedded the concept of induna with its military and tribal associations into the supervision of labour at the place of work.

120. Workers' Unity, May 1959, 'Dock strike: the facts'. This unfortunately is the only reference I have been able to locate in Workers' Unity to the struggle of dock workers in Durban. An interview with Stephen Dlamini in 1977 did not add any further information or additional interpretation of the dock workers' struggle beyond this description.
121. Daily News, 25 and 26 February 1959.
122. New Age, 5 March 1959: 3
123. *Ibid.*: 5
124. *Ibid.*, 9 April 1959: 6.
125. Minutes of Evidence (1949): 2955.
126. Industrial Legislation Commission, Minutes of Evidence (1949) : 2959.
127. *Ibid.* : 2960.

## CHAPTER 6

## NATIONAL OPPRESSION, MIGRANT LABOUR, AND THE DOCK LABOUR POOL, 1960-69

By extending the working day, capitalist production...not only produces a deterioration of human labour-power by robbing it of its normal moral and physical conditions of development and activity, but also produces the premature exhaustion and death of this labour-power itself...Experience shows too how the degeneration of the industrial population is retarded only by the constant absorption of primitive and natural elements from the countryside.

Marx, I (1976): 376, 380

The Bantu who come to work here (in the White area) accept employment here on the basis of migratory labour; they come to sell their labour here. All we are doing is to import labour into South Africa, and when those labourers have completed their work here, they return to their homeland...They only come here to supply labour. They are only supplying a commodity, the commodity of labour. Just as someone overseas who sells machinery to us is supplying a commodity, so the Bantu labourer is supplying a commodity to us...

National Party MP, House of Assembly Debates 1965, 14, C5460-5461.

In pursuit of maximum profits, capital has a constant tendency towards reducing the cost of labour, of depressing wages below the value of labour-power. The amount of surplus labour which can be extracted from the workers can be increased by lengthening the working day, intensifying labour, increasing its productivity, or by producing an abundance of disposable or unemployed wage labourers.<sup>1</sup> All these factors, with differing emphasis, were brought into operation by the labour supply company in the stevedoring trade in the 1960s. The DGLSC exemplified many of the solutions of capital to the 'very exacting problems' of working class struggles during the earlier period.<sup>2</sup> The amount of labour-time extracted from the permanently employed dock workers was increased considerably, not only by the more efficient operation of labour supplies to stevedoring companies, but also by the careful adjustment of migratory labour to new demands. The development of the company, its assertion of discipline over the workers, and reproduction of the migratory labour system, followed in phase the changing policy of the ruling class. Towards the end of the 1960s the labour supply company is seen as a model apartheid institution, providing a lead to other labour-intensive services and industries; combining efficiency with control.

With the suppression of the mass movement of resistance in the early 1960s, the apartheid state was free to take decisive action to arrest the social and political effects of

accelerated proletarianization. In essence the policy of an increasingly confident ruling class was to separate the expenditure of labour power from its reproduction, to attempt to locate the families of workers in the reserves, and to suppress all political organization of the African working class in the cities. Political repression was accompanied by a crucial change in migratory labour towards a contract labour system where African workers would only be permitted into the centres of employment on contract to a specific employer for a definite length of time. The re-stabilization of the economy after the outflow of capital following the Sharpeville massacre, and its subsequent rapid growth, was accompanied not by reforms, but by a sharp increase in the national oppression of the African masses. A central feature of this oppression was an attack on the actively employed black working class through the mobilization of the reserve army of labour on a nationally co-ordinated basis. The Bantustan policy was the political expression of this strategy, developing a black petty bourgeoisie in the countryside which, through its position in the state apparatus, posed deep antagonism to the African working class. While homestead food production in the reserves per family declined rapidly with an increased dependence on wage labour, the apartheid state stepped up the programme of rural resettlement in collaboration with the rural African petty bourgeoisie.

The Bantu Labour Act of 1964 expressed the state's determination to reorganize labour supplies and develop the homeland concept in the minds of African workers. The political authority of the chiefly bureaucracy in the reserves was vastly increased by the insistence

that all workers should be recruited through the rural labour bureaux. The national network of labour bureaux co-ordinated through a central office was more precisely developed, with increased powers to deport 'idle' or 'undesirable' Africans from the urban centres. This mammoth piece of legislation passed on to statute book without the mass protests and resistance which had characterized all major legislation in the earlier period. The national liberation movement which faced defeat after defeat following the Sharpeville massacre was also turning away from the strategy of mass resistance towards one of armed struggle, concentrating all its energies on the development of a military cadre group. With the failure of the 1961 stay-at-home in support of the demand for a national convention, working class action was judged to be of limited significance in the struggle for the seizure of political power.

While the economy expanded at a fairly low rate between 1957-62, by the period 1963-68 there was a tremendous pace of expansion of 6.2 per annum.<sup>3</sup> The upturn in the economy was characterized both by the increase in imports of machinery, and the greater exports of raw materials and some manufactured goods. This increased movement of commodities was crucial to the pressure of work in the docks, the expansion of facilities, and the inauguration of the labour supply company to meet the increased workload at the lowest wages. The increased trade objectively strengthened the position of the dock workers as

employers became more dependent on their skills and strength in handling masses of material, particularly important in the case of loading ships with manufactured goods.<sup>4</sup> The tremendous increase in goods handled in South African ports eventually posed the problem of productivity in the docks, how to load or unload ships at the fastest pace to achieve a rapid turnaround. Increasingly employers demanded that all bottlenecks in labour supply and the racial allocation of work should be abandoned and that a full programme of mechanization should be adopted.

At this point there was a transition in the views of the employers of the African working class. From being a mass undifferentiated labour force, the necessity for training, wage and skill differentiation, and professionalism was accepted. Despite this development and the subsequent advance of mechanization with more opportunities for urban workers, the labour supply company still insisted on migratory (and increasingly contract) labour as the basis for the recruitment and replenishment of workers in the docks. The accelerated pace of work in the docks tended to 'use up' the labour power of older and experienced workers, exhausting their productive capacity and increasing injuries and death.<sup>5</sup> New migratory workers eager for work and capable of doing the heaviest work could replenish the gaps in labour supply. Migratory labour, the movement of large numbers of workers in and out of the active reserve army of labour, would maintain the strength of the employers against the growing cohesiveness of workers steeled in the harsh discipline of the dock speed-up.

With the expanded powers in terms of labour recruitment and the network of labour bureaux, the stevedoring labour supply company had in its hands the levers of labour discipline and flexible supplies. With a growing industrial reserve force experienced in dock labour in the reserves (those resting and previously employed) the entire active labour force could be duplicated. The advantage of continual ebb and flux would dampening the formation of class consciousness. The Bantustan policy also strengthened the hand of the labour supply company politically, by *enabling it* to play off one reserve with its political authority against another, by dangling the prospect of employment before workers who were prepared to accept the discipline of the company without protest, thereby establishing a number of regional identities within the labour force. While the constant movement of workers strengthened the hand of the employers, the alternative of taking on urban workers would always be on hand. The latter process was dependent on the transition from 'pure' expenditure of labour power towards mechanization and eventually containerization. The employment of urban workers would mean a substantial revision in wages. An advantage of the contract labour system, particularly in its more refined aspects, would be that the transition could be managed with the lowest costs by a selective employment policy, merely, for example, by taking on an urban Hyster driver and not re-employing the migratory and exhausted stevedoring hand. This option could even be held back until the pace of

mechanization was fairly well advanced; no costs for pension schemes, sick pay, or redundancy payments having to be met.

### Organization of the labour supply company

The Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company which was born out of the crushing of workers' resistance in March 1959 was termed by its management as being 'an organized and planned attempt to pool labour resources' and to create a stable, experienced, and permanent labour force adequate to any demand.<sup>6</sup> That it was able to achieve these objectives without eliminating the continual movement of workers in the migratory labour system is testimony to the effectiveness of the labour bureaux in allocating labour, and to the greater efficiency of the company after the power of the stevedoring companies had been concentrated in one central command. What the national network of labour bureaux sought to achieve in relation to thousands of companies, the labour supply company worked out (not on the basis of a state bureaucracy as such, but directly on the foundation of the profit system) in relation to the stevedoring companies.

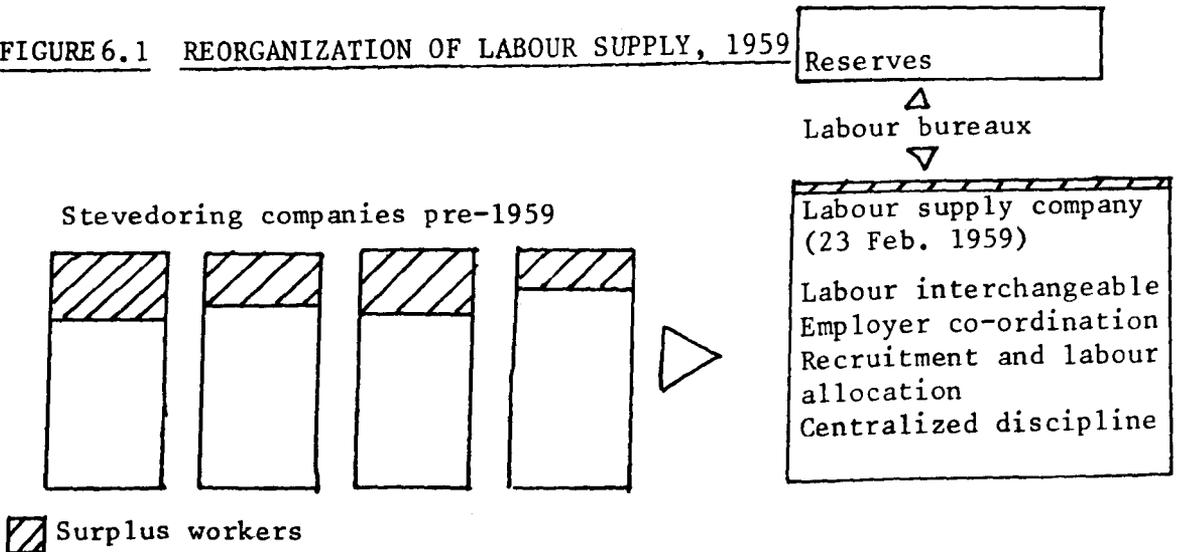
The company was able to achieve a more efficient allocation of labour previously employed by the stevedoring companies and to extend working hours. Soon after the DSLSC had been forced on the workers, the regular hours of the night shift were extended. In September 1960 it was reported that harbour workers (probably the more organized white workers) asked that the night shift should be

suspended until shipping activity again increased towards the end of the year. The employers and harbour authorities were unsympathetic. They argued that the principal reason for the continuation of night work was that it reduced the number of ships in Durban harbour at any one time more than the seasonal decline in arrivals. If night work was stopped, it was argued, periodic shipping congestion would return to the harbour. Indeed, the harbour authorities, far from considering suspending working at night, were extending its scope. Representatives of shipping companies in Durban were anxious to see the night shift remain 'a permanent feature of the port'. In September 1960 the Bluff bulk loading appliances for manganese ore, coal, and pig iron, were operated both day and night. To the shipping companies the night shift meant the difference between ships spending 10 hours in every 24 hours lying idle, or getting away promptly without any wasted time; in short, a matter of profit. The night work had effectively speeded up the turn-around in Durban, so that while other harbours to the north and south continued to experience occasional congestion, the free flow of ships through Durban remained unimpeded. Official statistics showed that although the night shift strength was only 15 per cent of the day shift, each night an average of 13,500 tons of cargo was handled. 'This is sufficient to maintain the port free of hold-ups and enable authorities to send ships on their way immediately they are finished.'<sup>7</sup> The increased demands for overtime and night shifts on the workers could only be made with the greater control brought about by the labour supply company, creating the basis for the pace of work to be speeded up. While previously

each company had had to maintain a surplus of workers to meet the highest possible demand, which in practice meant a perpetual collective oversupply, the labour supply company was able to reduce this daily surplus to a minimum.

The daily surplus of workers prior to the inception of the supply company obviously represented some cost to the companies if they were to employ workers on a weekly basis although it also represented the social power of the employers to decline to take on workers every day and their ability to replace any troublesome workers at will. The labour supply company achieved a decline in the overall daily surplus while consolidating the collective power of the employers. The DSLSC 'selected carefully' from the existing labour force.<sup>9</sup> The ability of the employers to replace militants from the first line of 'retained' workers in the compounds, was considerably strengthened by the growth of the national labour bureaux which presented employers with a second line of workers 'on tap' when required. The Bantu Labour Act of 1964 made the industrial reserve army in the countryside immediately available to employers who were demanding increasing supplies of labour during the 1960s boom.

FIGURE 6.1 REORGANIZATION OF LABOUR SUPPLY, 1959



Although the transition from daily to weekly wage contracts increased the control of the workers by the labour supply company but also added considerably to its wage bill, workers having to be paid an attendance fee for reporting when no work was available. The total cost to the company could be trimmed by cutting down the surplus workers to the lowest possible number, making the workers interchangeable between companies, extracting more labour time from those employed (particularly through overtime), and by intensifying the pace of work. All these steps, coupled with a gradual increase in mechanization and training of the workers, had a noticeable effect on the productivity of the workers and on the tonnage shifted each year. All these factors secured Durban as the major port of South Africa.

The labour supply company operated as the central intelligence for the stevedoring companies, planning for future labour demand and controlling the daily movement of workers. The primary task of the company was making an accurate assessment of the quality and quantity of labour required by the stevedoring companies. Wage registers of previous years were studied to determine the skills, experience and inter-changeability of the workers. The company operated on a non-profit basis to supply stevedoring labour to the four shareholding companies in Durban which act as its principals, each principal having equal access to the resources of the labour pool, requisitioning labour on a daily basis. The company makes the fullest use of the labour employed, breaking through the boundaries of previous company employment or skills, deploying workers at will. 'The workers can be freely allocated and have no

choice where and whom they wish to serve.'<sup>9</sup> This mobility of workers under the command of the supply company was crucial for the extraction of greater amounts of labour time from those employed, and at one level reduced the workers to a uniform quantum of labour power. The countervailing force against the brutal reduction of all workers to interchangeable labour units, was the existence of skills, specialization, and the fostering of group identity. In the interests of continuity, skilled groups of workers are allocated to particular companies requiring those skills; with the proviso that if there was no demand by that company, the individual worker or group of workers could be transferred to another company.<sup>10</sup>

The centralization of control in the labour supply company resulted in economies of scale in the accommodation of workers. Under the previous system the individual stevedoring companies employed five compound managers, but after the formation of the labour supply company this was reduced to two compound managers and one Bantu Personnel Officer. The clerical staff was also pruned, in 1970, the Company employing 10 African and 4 Indian clerks to maintain personnel records and to administer the compound. The detailed control over the stevedoring workers under the new regime of the labour supply company did not require an expansion of the company bureaucracy; centralization was accompanied by a smaller and more effective bureaucracy officialdom.

Division of labour and social control

The greater flow of goods through Durban docks during the 1960s increased the demand for skills and experience on the part of the stevedoring workers and of their discipline in work. Prior to the establishment of the labour supply company the indunas (African foremen) had the power to gather a team of workers under their own direct control. Under the company their powers were reduced and compensation paid in terms of a substantial wage differential between their wage and that of the stevedoring labourer. In reorganizing the workers in the wake of the 1959 strike, the company was not able to dispense with the traditional 'boss' authority of the indunas. The attitude of management towards the indunas was (and still is) ambiguous; aware of their skills and experience but suspicious of their former ambitions as potential labour sub-contractors.<sup>11</sup> There exist three types of induna in the dock area, which may help to explain some of the insecurity the employers feel in relation to their 'sergeant majors.' The compound indunas, militarist in spirit, puffed up with petty authority, and linked to chiefly authority in the reserves are unambiguously the police power of the employers. The stevedoring labourers have a more analytic approach to those indunas who work with them in the holds of the ships, having to share the danger and sweat of work. Their ability to earn the wage differential is based on their ability to keep up a steady pace of work. This may be done either by having a sympathetic and solidaristic relationship with the labourers or a reliance on company authority, and the workers respond in their assessment of their position accordingly. Their standing among the labourers is more akin

to a chargehand than a foreman, and they are vulnerable to the immediate sanctions of workers either physically in a dangerous workplace or by going slow. Finally there is the senior induna, whose task is to liaise with the white foreman and to oversee the work in each hold.

The company, aware of the distinction between formal authority and informal social organization,<sup>12</sup> attempted to make use of the closeness of the indunas to the labourers to maintain social discipline. The management of the company built social restraints into the structure of labour organization by allowing the indunas to select the members of their gang, and the labour force was organized into a series of gangs each under its induna. The gang was seen as the core institution within the labour process. As the deputy manager quoted approvingly from the Hawthorne Experiment: 'The primary group is the instrument of society through which in large measure the individual acquires his attitudes, opinions, goals, and ideals, it is also one of the fundamental sources of discipline and social controls'.<sup>13</sup>

Management fought to transform the objective existence of solidarity among workers into a force for its domination of the labour process. Its distortion of social science is shown by blurring over the difference between the 'primary group', an association of workers in production, and the gang, directly controlled by the instrument of management the indunas. Rather than acknowledging that workers 'attitudes and opinions' derive from their experience of productive labour, the company management

stressed the cultural background of the workers so as to derive the form of command over labour in the docks. Because of the cultural background of the workers management argues that 'competent Bantu leaders completely adjusted to the demands of the trade' should be appointed and trained for supervision. 'They will be the first line supervisor in the primary work groups and will play a vital role in the achievement of the objects of the trade.'<sup>14</sup> Given a situation of national oppression in which African people as a whole were denied social advancement, management considered the immediate supervisors of African workers should be African foremen to achieve higher levels of productivity. White supervisors should be provided with an anthropological approach to African workers, stressing their 'cultural backgrounds'.<sup>15</sup> With the considerably increased power of the employers following on the establishment of the labour supply company, management adopted a reformer's zeal to the reorganization of social relations among supervisors and supervised, black and white:

Management can therefore, manipulate inter-relationships within these groups to a certain extent, and so achieve desired objects such as stimulating the will-to-work, increased productivity, a different attitude, etc... Its task in this regard is to use every opportunity to remove pin-pricks, to act immediately where incidents occur which lead to strained relationships (abusive language, assaults) and constant guidance in matters<sup>16</sup> relating to personal relations in the job situation.

Yet in one crucial area the management claims to leave the authority over workers to the induna: in selecting the members of a gang. In the language of bureaucracy the gangs became called Stevedoring Labour Units (SLU) and consisted of eight stevedoring

hands selected by the induna to which were added the semi-skilled winchmen or gangwaymen. The SLU was seen as an answer to the problem of labour discipline as management claimed there was considerable prestige attached to membership in what were considered the best Units. 'The natural tendency to group formation is used and a team spirit emerged.'<sup>17</sup> By acting at one step removed from the selection process, management hoped to be able to use the existing complementary relationships and networks within the labour force to secure the highest output. A heightened esprit de corps in one group sets in motion competition with the others; competitive human interaction in the service of capital.

In discussing the combination of workers in co-operative labour Marx argues there is an increase in the productive power of the individual but also the creation of new productive power which is intrinsically a collective one. 'Apart from the new power that arises from the fusion of many forces into a single force, mere social contact begets in most industries a rivalry and a stimulation of the 'animal spirits', which heightens the efficiency of each individual worker.'<sup>17</sup> This arises from the social nature of human beings. In South Africa employers are well aware of the expanded productive powers of combined workers under the command of capital and the organization of African workers in gangs characterizes the policy of management particularly in transport, municipal services, mining, and agriculture. The gang asserts the sociability of workers as human beings, and by regulating the expenditure of labour power (particularly with work songs) extends the

labour power of the workers. In this way municipal gangs, for instance, can maintain vigorous work by co-ordinating their movements to thump out carefully marked trenches in the roads. Similarly railway workers in gangs are adept at throwing railway tracks onto the wagons by skillfully co-ordinated collective effort, this co-ordination emanating from the workers themselves in shout and song.

While management has placed a strong emphasis on the development of gangs and the efficient allocation of labour on a daily basis to the principal companies, the demands of greater productivity in the docks to meet the inrush of imports during the 1960s required increasing differentiation, division of labour, and the growth of skills by the workers. While the whole tendency of the more exacting regulations on movement of workers and centralized control of the 1960s was towards making African workers units of labour and inter-changeable between one job and another, and to reducing the cost of contracted labour, the demand of capital in the docks for higher output and lower costs meant some increase in the skills of African stevedores was needed. The growing differentiation of the workers took two main forms: the establishment of a definite group of black supervisors and increasing numbers of workers to operate the machinery on the ships and in the holds.

According to management, the indunas 'select themselves' on the advice of the supervisory staff who assess the 'natural leaders'. Their role is particularly important in setting the pace of work and co-ordinating the work of the gang with that of the specialized workers: winchmen, gangwaymen, and crane drivers. The group of specialized workers reflects the slowly increasing mechanization in stevedoring in the

1960s. The winchmen operate the winches when required and on the more modern ships, the electrical cranes, when they are sufficiently experienced. The gangwaymen have the important work of communicating by signalbat with the crane operator or the winchmen and in warning the workers in the hold when cargo is being lowered. The maize trimmer's job has grown with the introduction of advanced mechanization in grain loading; the work is one of spraying the maize evenly so it will not shift when the ship heaves in rough weather. When the specialized workers are not required for their task they have to fill in with the stevedoring workers; centralized management breaks down any elements of job demarcation.

This level of differentiation among workers, although evident earlier in Cape Town, came rather later to Durban where it seems management did not have the same urgency to increase the division of labour. The distinction between different types of work is one not so much based on an apparently objective difference in skill but one of specialization and wage differences. The stevedoring labourers are not 'unskilled' and therefore <sup>not</sup> easily replaced. Although they are directed by the induna they acquire considerable ability in moving cargo in the hold and securing it properly before being hauled up. Co-ordinated collective work is essential when very large and heavy objects are being moved. All this work has to be done at speed. The ship's owners are anxious to keep shipping costs low by turning about as soon as possible. This criterion affects the overall pace of work and the levels of accidents and injuries; the stevedoring workers have to be able to work effectively in the fastest possible time.

Over the years since the inception of the labour supply company a growing number of experienced and specialized workers has been built up to be available for a variety of work operations. The control over the workers and higher rates of exploitation made possible by the DSLSC were not incompatible with certain limited 'welfare' activities (such as attempting to reduce assaults) and raising the skills of the workers to perform new work. This was spelt out by the management in describing the necessary function of the company: 'It must effectively control the labour force and guard its welfare, but must also ensure that the workers render the service required of them, that they possess the skills necessary or are afforded the opportunity to acquire such skills as rapidly as possible.'<sup>18</sup>

	Stevedoring labourers	Gangwaymen/Winchmen	Indunas
1964	2,259	164	122
1968	2,239	250	107

The composition of occupations in the company shows that despite the oppressive conditions following the 1959 strike and the increasing powers of management, rising productivity in the docks was secured by intensifying labour time and increased mechanization. The middle group of workers, the gangwaymen and winchmen, increased by 52 per cent in the period 1964-68 making a marked increase in the capacity and adaptability of the workers as a whole. The increased organization of the workers as a whole under the regime of the labour supply company, the specialized SLU, command structures from the management to the

ships, actually permitted some reduction in the number of indunas by 12 per cent. Management was also able to prune the bureaucracy of control and achieve some economies of scale. Under the old system five compound managers were required, while the Company compound which centralized control of accommodation needed only two compound managers and one Bantu Personnel Officer.

#### Types of work and labour organization

Despite the fairly steady increase in foreign trade, the amount of work which is available each day fluctuates considerably. Over the broad post-war period there were several changes in the methods of shipping and packing which considerably changed the nature of the work. Loose cargo became increasingly palletized, mechanized and bulk loading of major exports such as sugar, maize, manganese, became universal. Greater uniformity in the size and quality of the cargo (either bulk, packaged, or loose) was achieved. Management claimed that improved command over stevedoring labour in the docks resulted in the lowering of the breakage rate and lessened the danger for the workers. Through the changed nature of the work and successive wage determinations, different forms of work became classified: general, cold, bulk, dirty, and maize. Systematic wage bonuses were paid for each type of work defined in the wage determinations.

Work is divided not only among the workers in each SLU but also these groups become specialized and tend to handle the same types of cargo and machinery. There are 90 SLU controlled by the DSLSC which have a certain permanence, as members are changed only through leave, sickness or injury. The induna who is permitted by the Company to personally chose his group of eight men is placed in immediate command of the workers. The size of the work group (the SLU and specialized workers) is adjusted in conformity with the material handled, combining particular clusters of workers for each work operation. The DSLSC estimates it requires a gang of ten stevedoring labourers with gangwaymen and winchmen for each crane, to which is added derrick gangs if bulk cargo is being handled.<sup>19</sup>

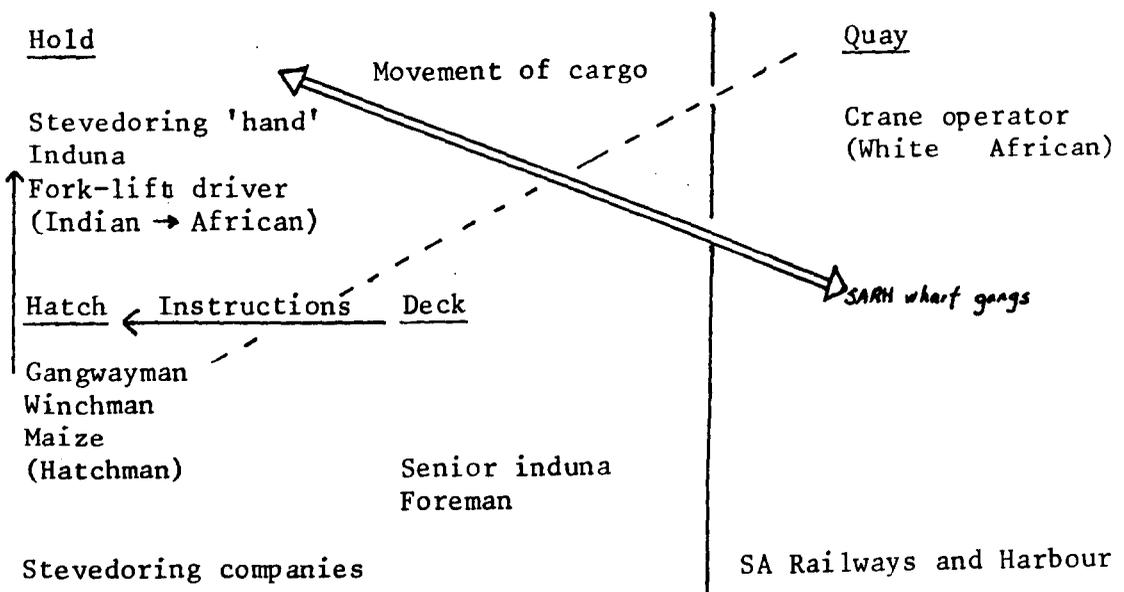
Particular SLU become specialized to handle certain kinds of work, a development which is encouraged by management which feels the specialist teams provide considerable status for their members 'which then becomes a powerful control measure'. Further specialization was achieved by linking the SLUs with particular foremen which lead to greater output with fewer supervisory problems and 'excellent labour relations.'<sup>20</sup> Management sees improved output as a result of its direct intervention in the workplace to establish social groupings to regulate 'work habits and attitudes' and to provide pressure on non-conforming members. This is seen as particularly important in establishing co-operative relations between rulers and ruled, supervisors and workers, as well as in intra-group relationships. 'A group...softens the

adaptation problems for each other, which is very important, where representatives from the two different cultural groups are found in the job situation.<sup>21</sup> The possibility, and inevitability, of clashes of real interests between the supervisors, black and white, and the supervised, the mass of stevedoring workers is not explored.

The gangs on each ship are made up of SLU and specialized workers according to the work in hand. The gangs in the holds of the ships tend to operate fairly autonomously under the general supervision of a hatchman or foreman and the immediate direction of the induna. The work requires close co-ordination between the crane operator on the quay and the gangs in the holds; the day's work is set out by the foreman from instructions and the ship's plans.

FIGURE 6.2

The dock labour process (pre-containerization)



(The work of the hatchman is not defined by wage determinations and becomes taken over by the senior induna).

The co-ordination of the two spheres of work; on the quay and in the holds is dependent on the gangwayman who signals directions to the crane operator. In turn, the pace of work in the holds is determined by the speed with which the crane operators move the cargo and are ready to take on the next load.

Within the labour process significant changes are taking place; both in the structure of command, and in the racial allocation of jobs. Although there has never been a job reservation determination for the stevedoring trade (possibly because the lack of mechanization which could have provided an opening for white labour on the basis of a substantial wage differential), the structure of command in the dock area duplicates that of apartheid society as a whole. The conventional colour bar operating in the trade debar the indunas (who are often fully conversant in English, who understand the ship's plans, and who have acquired the skills of administration) from further progression up the hierarchy of job classification. Yet the racial allocation of jobs is not absolute; during the 1960s the immediate supervisors of the workers increasingly became the black indunas rather than the white foremen. This change was prompted by the need of capital to 'Africanize' the employers' command over the workers, to replace the white foremen who were increasingly attracted to other work and substituted by inexperienced white immigrants, and to lower the total costs of supervision. The work of the foreman stevedore was increasingly taken up by the 'senior induna', a job which was included for the first time in Wage Determination 308 of 1969.

This job, as defined, includes the supervision, under the general direction of a foreman stevedore, of two or more indunas and their teams of stevedoring labourers.<sup>22</sup> In practice the indunas had previously been recognized to be authorities on moving cargo and within general instructions had been granted considerable autonomy. The white learner stevedores, inexperienced in the trade, are advised by their companies to heed the advice of the experienced indunas.

The other areas of change reflect the growing mechanization in the docks; the power driven equipment for trimming maize during bulk loading, and the fork-lift trucks used to load, unload, and stack cargo within the holds.<sup>23</sup> The maize trimmer and fork-lift truck driver were included in wage determinations for the first time in 1969, a reflection of capital investment by SARH on the wharves and speeded up work within the holds during the 1960s. There were 11 Indian fork-lift truck drivers in the holds of ships in November 1963 and subsequent expansion increased both the number of African and Indian workers in this occupation as the physical strength of the workers became increasingly supplemented by mobile machinery.<sup>24</sup>

The labour process in the docks is fairly rigidly divided into two sections: that under the control of the stevedoring companies on board the ships, and that under the control of SARH on the wharves. As the tonnage of cargo passing through Durban increased dramatically during the post-war boom, so both employers

searched for means of raising the output of the workers. While mechanization was always a possibility constantly explored by the SARH in relation to bulk cargo exports such as coal, maize, sugar, and manganese, the problem of achieving a fast turn-about of ships unloading manufactured goods and machinery, for example, still remained. The immediate response of employers to the lengthening queues of ships outside the harbour was to extend working hours and attempt to build up better co-ordination between the two parts of the labour process. Steenkamp, the Wage Board chairman during this period felt that despite the limitations on mechanization and problems in developing skills of stevedoring workers, 'productivity can be increased considerably through better co-ordination between the parallel stevedoring labour forces on the vessel and on the quayside.'<sup>25</sup> In his view there was much room for improved co-operation. Following the crisis in shipping during the 1970s with ever-increasing delays in unloading, the solution to the problem came to be seen in increased capital expenditure in the harbour and in bringing African workers into the key job of crane driver. This has been one of the most important changes in the labour process, and puts African workers in a commanding position both on the ships and on the wharves.

It is not possible to present a comprehensive and finalized map of the labour process which is shaped by mechanization and by struggles over racial allocation of work. These struggles are not necessarily fought in these terms but at one step removed: over the wages of the most exploited sections or over the hours of work. Changes in the labour process have to be presented dynamically in terms of

crisis which quickens their pace and chronologically to sort out causal from associated factors.

### Intensified labour and migrancy

During the 1960s the labour supply company attempted to attain a 'fine tuning' between the peaks of demand for labour and the supply from the reserves. In essence the inauguration of the labour supply company had cut the pool of workers available to employers to somewhat above the maximum demand for labour on any day, a considerable difference from the situation in the 1950s where about 6,000 workers could apply for 1,000 jobs on a day.<sup>26</sup> The increased outlay which employers had to make to maintain the varying number of surplus workers on each day was more than made up by extending the working day (both the hours worked normally before overtime and by the addition of a permanent night shift). The added expenditure on a permanent workforce was also more than compensated by the steadily rising tonnage of cargo passing through the port (Appendix), as the economy moved into the higher growth rates of the 1960s. After the black workers had been brought under tight central control, the white railway workers (crane drivers and wharf workers) could be compelled to increase the hours they worked parallel to the stevedoring workers in the hold.

The first wage determination in 1959 laid down the extraordinarily long hours worked in the docks, hours the Wage Board claimed were unilaterally set by the SARH. While the Factories Act prescribed a maximum of 46 hours a week, the normal hours to be worked in the docks were 48, and the remaining

hours of compulsory overtime and work on Sunday could bring the total hours worked a week to 82. Throughout the 1960s the workers employed by DSLSC were required to work every day of the week, the only daylight hours free being Saturday afternoon. And even on Saturday the ordinary hours could be extended by two hours overtime and then even further if the work was declared to be emergency work by the port authority.<sup>28</sup> Despite a clause providing for limits to overtime, the regulations were in effect flexible enough should there be a peak demand for the workers to be taken to the extremity of physical endurance.

The amount of labour-time expended by the workers every day was in fact even longer; they presented themselves for duty up to forty-five minutes before the ordinary hours were calculated. The time spent waiting in queues and being transported to the berths, often a considerable distance from the compound, does not constitute working time. Work officially only began at 0720 on the ships. There was a lunch break from 1200 to 1300 and then work to 1700. If overtime was worked, a tea break of 20 minutes was allowed between 1700 and 1900, and work may have continued until 2100. If the work was not completed by then, a night shift was meant to take over. During the weekend, work continued until Saturday noon, unless extended by overtime and emergency work. Sunday work was (and still is) compulsory and is paid for at higher rates as well as the daily allowance.

It is important to describe the hours of work in the 1960s in some detail for two reasons: the make up of hours in the working

day is a matter which leads to many disputes, and the provision for extending the working day to these extremes helps us to understand the overwhelming dependence of stevedoring on migrant labour. While during the togt period these extreme hours did not weigh down as heavily on the workers who could take a day off or decline to work on Sundays, under the strict regime of the DSLSC workers were required to report for work every day. 'The employers want to kill us with overtime', the workers complained when the labour supply company was formed.<sup>29</sup> The extreme prolongation of the working day in the docks marked capital's demand for higher output from an almost fully employed and smaller workforce. This was only possible on the basis of the poverty wages paid in the industry by drawing on workers from the most distant reserves, not only to replace those experienced workers who resisted the higher levels of exploitation, but also those who were exhausted or injured. The strategy of the employers was to base the industry on migrant labour, the harsh oppression and exploitation driving away urban African workers. The stevedoring industry particularly during the early 1960s invested in comparatively little mechanization and maintained its profitability on the basis of extracting absolute surplus value: intensifying labour and extending the working day. The DSLSC adopted an active recruitment programme initially as a strike-breaking tactic to replace strikers in 1959 by fresh workers from the reserves. Later evidence shows a more sophisticated approach in recruiting labour, management becoming more confident of its ability to meet the demand for labour, and more concerned about the quality of the workers and their stamina for prolonged and exacting work. While in the wake of a strike workers from the most

desperately impoverished reserves may<sup>have</sup> ~~been~~ suitable to re-establish the employers' control, recruitment from selected areas would later become important as mass unemployment made a better quality of worker available to the stevedoring employers.

The only basis on which a constant supply of labour could be available for the exhaustingly longer hours worked in stevedoring was by entrenching migrant labour which was effectively separated from family life and so prepared for a 'staple diet' of long hours of hard work, little recreation, and sleeping quarters under the control of the employers. As the pace of mechanization slowly picked up during the 1960s it became more important for management to search out the most capable workers to take over key jobs and maintain the migrant labour system at the same time. Management became highly selective in its recruitment, benefitting from the vast industrial reserve army created by growing capital-intensity in industry, mining, and services.

The position of employers who looked towards the reserves as their hinterland for labour supply was considerably strengthened by the growing effectiveness of the pass laws and increased powers to regulate the movement of African labour in the Bantu Labour Act, No.67 of 1964. The systematic controls exacted over mine workers from 1911 were extended by this Act over all African workers, increasing capital's power to direct African workers to the lowest paid and most exhausting work. During this phase of capital accumulation the state's emphasis was not so much on forcing African workers out of the reserves to work (by this stage even sizeable

adjustments to the land available to Africans would not have secured their 're-peasantization' as returns from the land declined drastically) but rather to limit the rapidly growing urban working class and channel African labour effectively to increase the total amount of labour time available.<sup>30</sup> Another crucial feature of the legislation and administration was to increase the powers to expel African workers from the industrial centres, and to send certain classes of workers to work colonies, an acknowledgement that for increasing numbers of workers the reserves had completely lost their attraction even as places in which to die. The Bantu Labour Act provided a more developed network of labour bureaux extending from the Bantustans to the urban centres, limiting the access of workers to the towns to seek work, and even further granting powers to officials to cancel existing contracts of service between African workers and employers on the basis of wideranging conditions. The Act increased the political and workplace controls over African workers. Contracts of service could be cancelled if the employment of an African worker 'impairs or is likely to impair the safety of the State or of the public or of a section of the public or threatens or is likely to threaten the maintenance of public order.'

The long list of offences in terms of the Act increased the employers control over African workers sharply. Desertion, strikes and go-slows, neglect of duty, refusal to obey a lawful command of an employer, the use of abusive language, or acceptance of other contracts of service were all made criminal offences in terms of Section 15. Bantu labour inspectors were empowered to inspect

compounds, to inquire into and redress grievances, and to do other duties. These inspectors were given wide powers including those of summary trial of African workers for committing any of the offences above. An inspector may caution, reprimand, or fine an offender up to two rand which is deducted by the employer from the worker's wage. These legal powers which made resistance to employers a criminal offence strengthened the employers in their domination over the workers but were not used uniformly, in most cases the employers were able to maintain control through their social power over the working class, by dismissing workers and in effect handing them over to the state for expulsion from the urban centre.

The recruitment of African workers is a highly defined legal and administrative process, and the DSLSC follows the precise methods laid down by apartheid legislation. In trying to maintain cycles of employment which would provide an average number of workers appropriate to the demand for labour in the docks, the Company follows a definite strategy. Work-seekers are not drawn from the municipal labour bureau, as was the case with most manufacturing industries during the 1960s, and virtually all workers are recruited from rural areas at a considerable distance from Durban. Although recruiting practices are formal, they do not approach that of the highly developed form in the mining industry, and no agents or runners are used. The impression is gained of recruitment through the Assistant Manager, Dreyer, being conducted on the basis of personal contacts with the BAD bureaucracy

supplemented with some discussion with chiefs and headmen. A definite procedure is followed by the Company. When more workers are to be recruited a requisition is first sent to the municipal labour bureau, which invariably indicates that it is unable to fill the positions required at the wage rates offered. Urban workers are not prepared to work the exhaustingly long hours when other employment is available, and only very rarely are workers recruited from the Durban municipal areas. The requisition is then passed on to the district labour bureau with forms indicating the areas preferred and the numbers of workers required.

The Company has been granted a preferential choice by BAD of workers in the areas north of the Tugela, and asks for workers from four or five districts which are particularly favoured: Nongoma (the home district of the Paramount Chief), Nkandla, Hlabisa, Mtonjaneni, and Mahlabatini (the home district of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi). Permission is then requested to recruit workers from those areas from the Pietermaritzburg labour bureau which controls the movement of African workers from Kwa Zulu districts. The forms are then returned approved, and the district labour bureau is advised on what days the Company will be visiting the areas. Dreyer says he has built up his own intelligence service and can telephone key persons in various areas and collect workers within forty-eight hours or less.

The Company officials then proceed to the districts where the workseekers have been marshalled at the Bantu Commissioner's Office. Apparently many more workers apply to be employed than are requested, and the Company can afford to be highly selective. Officials report that workseekers can exceed requirements by up to 600 per cent, and cite this as proof of the high standing of the company rather than massive unemployment in the reserves.<sup>31</sup> Workseekers are *said to be* judged primarily in terms of physique, but the Company also claims to spread its labour requirements throughout a number of districts. The precise policy which is adopted is not spelt out by the Company: it is likely that quite abrupt changes take place when there are wholesale dismissals of strikers who are replaced with fresh recruits from the reserves. Recruitment, it will be argued, is not a matter of employing objective categories such as physique and dexterity or even 'balance' between different areas, but heavily influenced by political rule in the reserves. It is this quality which gives the process of recruitment directly from the reserves a dynamic context, responsive to the growth of a massive industrial reserve army of labour and of the changing political environment in the reserves.<sup>32</sup>

Once a worker is approved, his particulars are taken and he is given a summary of the rates of pay and conditions of work. A contract form is then made out (apparently not specifying the precise length of service which is governed by the Bantu Labour Act as a maximum of one year or 360 shifts), and the worker is

given a slip of paper with the Company's address. Contrary to the policy of the mining companies, the Company is opposed to providing transport or granting advances. Management argues the 'good faith' of the recruit is proved when he turns up at the right time in Durban, i.e. they do not feel any inducements to report for work in Durban are needed. The overwhelming supply of labour available to the Company in the reserves can be explained not only in terms of the rising unemployment of the 1960s but also by the growing effectiveness of the apparatus of passes, labour bureaux, and influx control which severely restricts free access to the cities to seek work.

Because of its semi-official standing with the Department of Bantu Administration, workers who are recruited by the Company are released from the myriad restrictions on entry into Durban. The slip of paper enables the workers to bypass the barriers of influx control in a similar manner to recruited mine workers. Official approval is granted to the Company, not only because of its strategic location in supplying labour to the most important port in South Africa, but also because none of the workers recruited will become a 'burden' on the totally inadequate housing provided in the townships or even the official hostel accommodation. By recruiting workers on limited contract (length of service is limited by the Bantu Labour Act to 360 shifts), the Company is not adding to the growing urban African working class which is completely separated from the land.

Migrancy is perpetuated by effectively carrying out state regulations controlling the movement of workers, by providing centrally controlled compound accommodation,

and keeping up an active recruitment of workers from key reserves. These objectives of the Company in keeping wage costs to a minimum while extracting the maximum amount of labour time from the workers are an important aspect of state policy. As in the case of railways and the police, there are no difficulties in bringing African workers from any 'Bantu area' into the prescribed urban area of Durban.<sup>33</sup>

The Company has built up consistent relationships with particular magisterial districts in Natal and the Transkei, although these are not necessarily the obvious relationships spelt out by management or academics adopting the perspective of the Company. The management presents a view of the workforce being basically Zulu-speaking and ideologically tribal in terms of their home-orientation and associations at work. This view is echoed in a recent study of social action among stevedoring workers which adopts an ethnological approach to the actions of stevedoring workers and separates non-Zulu speaking workers completely from its analysis.<sup>34</sup> This, it is argued, completely misrepresents both the history of contract labour to the docks from Pondoland dating back to the early 1900s and of united working class action in the docks in support of demands for a living wage and in action against employers and the state. The patterns of recruitment are considerably more complex than a certain preference for workers from one district or another and show changes over time.

TABLE 6.1 ORIGINS OF STEVEDORING WORKERS, JANUARY 1970<sup>35</sup>

	Numbers	Sub-Total	%	Rank
Region 38, Kwa-Zulu 'heartland'				
Nongoma	290			1
Nkandla	227			2
Mtonjaneni	175			5
Nqutu	56	748	35.1	11
Region 21, Pondoland				
Mount Alyff	215			3
Bizana	170			6
Tabankulu	169			7
Flagstaff	40	594	27.9	13
Region 33 and 39, Kwa-Zulu coastal areas				
Hlabisa	186			4
Mtunzini	42	228	10.7	12
Region 34 and 36, Inland and Midlands				
Estcourt	138			8
Kranskop	84	222	10.4	10
Region 35,				
Ixopo	88			9
Alfred	32	120	5.6	14
Other regions	218	218	10.2	-
	<u>2,130</u>		<u>99.9</u>	

Notes: See Figure 6.3.

The regions are those grouped for official statistical purposes.

The statistics show a pattern of areas of origin concentrated in regions fairly remote from the urban areas where homestead production declined seriously only during the 1950s, and where the production of use values (cattle, beer, beadwork) within the homestead still assumes some importance. These areas could be considered appropriate



for capital in the stevedoring trade precisely because they are areas of relative rather than absolute impoverishment and destitution, and the rural homestead production still retains some ability to provide a subsidy to wage labour. The areas from which labour is drawn could be characterized as between the most remote and the primary supply areas to the urban industrial centres, where proletarianization is advanced but the homesteads not reduced to complete destitution.

From the Company's view these areas possess definite advantages during a period of extraction of absolute surplus value, long hours and intense work. In contrast to the reserves supplying labour to Northern Natal towns, Pietermaritzburg, and Durban-Pinetown (those from which workers have evolved a pattern of weekly migration) migration from the more remote areas has a long-term character.<sup>36</sup> Once the workers have been accepted for employment in the urban centres they tend to stay on for the full length of the contract if possible to maintain their savings rather than spend their wages on costly transport. This certainly has the advantage for the Company which worked seven days a week during the 1960s, there was little incentive for the workers to leave during the weekends. Resistance to long hours being worked during the weekends would be correspondingly less, and management would have the advantage of a full complement of labour on Monday rather than higher absenteeism after workers extended their visits home into the following week.

While management of the Company obviously attempts to take fullest advantage of the different characteristics of labour in different regions, it is not capable of a completely objective manipulation of the migratory system. While workers from areas undergoing rapid proletarianization (as opposed to those in which proletarianization is complete) are preferred for a number of reasons, the Company has been forced to adopt the recruitment strategy because of the resistance of experienced workers particularly during the late 1950s to the low wages and intensified labour demanded of them by the employers. The hostility of urban workers and those workers who still possessed certain rights to seek employment at the urban labour bureaux to the desperately low wages and exhausting hours of stevedoring labour which characterized the extraction of absolute surplus value in the docks during the 1960s, forced capital into long-range migration in an attempt to find fresh workers of the right physique and uncontaminated by notions of class consciousness.

It was only at the periphery of commodity relations, in the reserves where the ideology of clan and ethnicity was being strengthened under a salaried traditional bureaucracy that there was the supply of appropriate labour. In these areas a migrant working class was being reproduced under conditions which fitted the level of exploitation of labour power in the docks. In the dying patriarchal society of the distant reserves, capital could take advantage of the ideological and material conditions of the reproduction of labour power. The wives of workers continued to maintain the gardens and fields of maize and sorghum to subsidize the wages drawn from the urban areas in the form of irregular remittances. Through cattle ownership and kin, homestead landholding,

and the reinforcement of ethnic consciousness in the Bantustans, the state and employers struggled to maintain a social and political orientation to the reserves while material conditions forced the men and growing numbers of women into wage labour.

When the forces of attachment to the land weakened under the faster pace of proleterianization in the 1960s, the state intervened to maintain a legal relationship with the countryside by stepping up the state apparatus repelling impoverished workers from the cities and recycling them again into sectors paying the most desperate poverty wages. In sectors like the docks where a low organic composition of capital demanded the most rigorous direct controls over workers, employers were impelled to draw upon labour under the sway of ideological notions such as the induna system. Only in the more distant reserves did chiefly authority and the command of indunas carry any social weight. Employers hoped to carry this ideological baggage over to the workplace under the immediate direction of management. Only in the most distant reserves did the 'natural reserve' of fresh labour for exhausting work exist. In the closer areas ravaged for decades by free commodity relations, a permanent export of labour power and import of food, impoverished workers would become absorbed into urban life and threaten the high levels of exploitation of dock workers. It was only on the basis of long range migration that the separation of the worker from the homestead could be achieved and the extended hours throughout the day and deep into the night be worked.

Within this portrayal of the employers' successful exploitation of differences in social relations in the reserves two contradictions existed. The first was that the general picture of the distant reserves and their functionality to intensified wage labour concealed the growing numbers of workers from these regions completely dependent on wage labour for the reproduction of themselves and their families. Along with these objective developments, the continuity of class consciousness and a sense of history of themselves as dock workers was not obliterated by migration and class suppression. (This point will be developed further in the following chapter). The second was that a 'pure' migratory system was never achieved although the number of workers living in Durban residential areas remained small. As the Company gained in experience in its recruiting activities and in meeting the daily demand for labour these workers were not seen as posing a major problem in themselves; the conditions of work were set in the context of the overwhelming dominance of the migrant workers. As mechanization advanced towards the late 1960s the permanent urban workers could be seen by employers as adding a stable element necessary for the development of operative skills; it was only if their presence created new demands from the workers that difficulties would be created for management.<sup>37</sup> Yet the small proportion of workers who managed to secure houses or set up shacks in the urban area showed that some workers managed to overcome or evade the repressive legislation. This group of workers could have succeeded in qualifying for urban residence through being employed by the same employer for over ten years while working in the stevedoring trade

and by gradually shifting their energy to secure urban residence. Workers who have permission to live in Durban are not attracted to work in the stevedoring trade. They have other employment opportunities in less strenuous and higher paid work. In the past many stevedoring workers lived beyond the control of the Native Affairs Department in Cato Manor. By 1970 altogether about 125 workers, according to management estimates, lived in Kwa Mashu, Umlazi, Lamontville, or in the backyards of the white residents of Durban as they have done for decades. But during the 1960s the tendency was for even this small proportion to decline, and in 1967 it was reported that 135 workers employed by the Company were urban residents, and in 1964 the Wage Board reported that 250 employees were not housed by the Company.<sup>38</sup> The figure probably demonstrates that even on the basis of limited mechanization and longer contracts the long working hours and early starting times worked to reduce the urban workers employed by the Company, quite apart from stricter enforcement of apartheid legislation. For the urban workers considerable expenses in transport would have to be met, a cost which was deliberately excluded by the Wage Board from its estimation of the needs of the workers as the large majority lived in the compound. According to the Wage Board in 1964 the Company paid the cost of transport for urban residents, a practice which was not claimed to be in operation in subsequent investigations.<sup>39</sup> The gradual reduction of the number of urban workers employed by the Company marks a completely opposite tendency to the demands of urban segregation in the 1950s when the Minister of Native Affairs proposed in 1958 that the workers should be gradually moved to

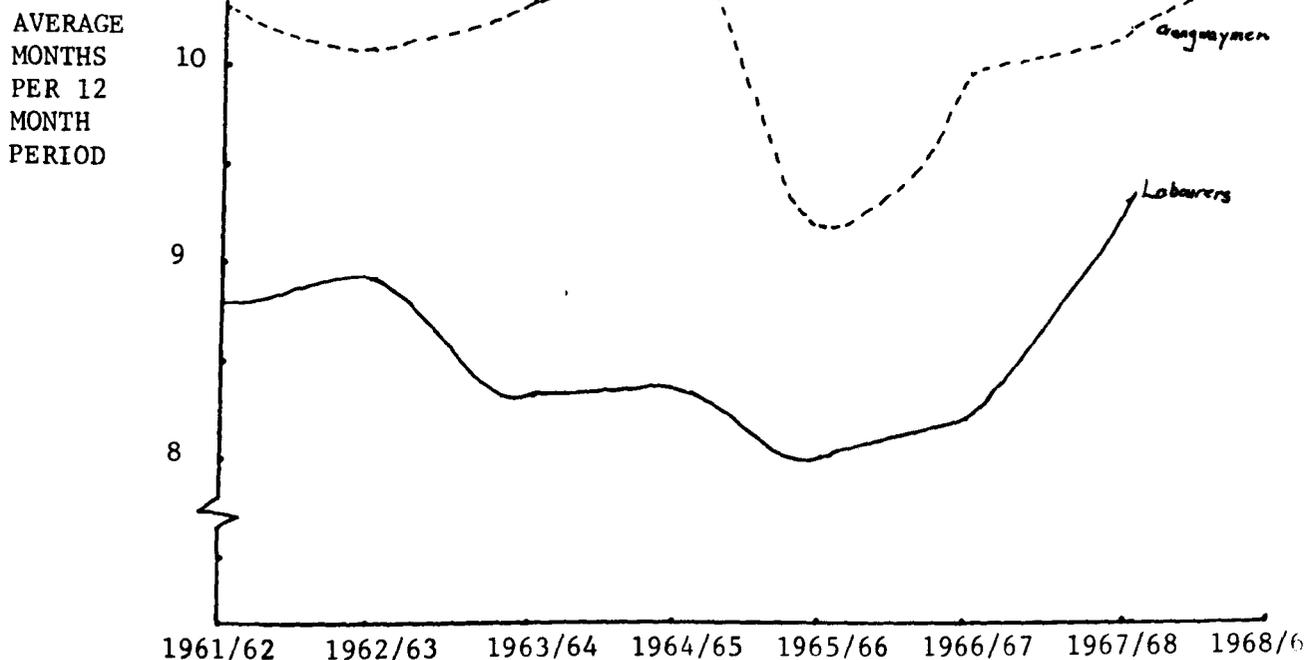
Kwa Mashu. Ironically this development would have accelerated the transformation of the migrants into an urban working class, and as we have argued the opposite tendency is apparent. While the state may have proposed urban segregation as basis for ideological control over the workers, the employers preferred the 'great advantage' of direct rule over the workers in compounds. By the mid-1960s the National Party's argument about compelling workers to live in the townships was dropped, and the compound controls were approved.<sup>40</sup> The question of the appropriate form of control over African workers undergoing intensified labour was decided in favour of direct rule by the employers. African workers in the stevedoring trade are now in a position where it is virtually impossible to qualify for urban residence and thus get rights to accommodation in African residential areas. Even if the right to live in the urban area is granted, access to housing is certainly not guaranteed. Despite these formidable obstacles: employers' concern that urbanization would challenge their rule and the basis of the cheap labour system, and legislative controls which deny any legal right to residence and accommodation, workers are determined to gain these rights for their children. The very denial of access to urban residence and employment except on contract has made these rights more precious to migrant workers who try to gain legal entitlement even if they do not themselves want to live in the area. For those who find they do not qualify for urban residence in terms of the law or find that accommodation is not available in the townships, the alternative is the growing squatters' camps on the outskirts of the city.

For the overwhelming majority of workers, access to urban residence was eliminated by socio-economic and increasingly legal controls. Yet the patterns of migration and length of contract were certainly not set and fixed at a certain level at the inception of the labour supply company and continued throughout the 1960s. But while there were significant shifts in the length of service and month of termination of contract (two issues which will be discussed at this point as means of measuring changes in amount of labour-time and relation of contracts to seasonal changes) there was also no inevitable progression towards a twelve month cycle of employment and complete separation from cycles of agricultural production. These factors do, however, have to be judged against a complete view of the nature of exploitation of migrant labour, the exhaustion of workers having inordinately long hours, and the response of capital as a whole (both employers and the state) to overall rapid proletarianization in a period of speeded capital accumulation. While management had powers to adjust the areas of recruitment and the cycles of employment, other issues also affect questions of 'labour commitment' such as growing impoverishment in the reserves, the demand for labour in the docks, differentiation of workers, mechanization, and importantly, wages. All these factors have a direct bearing on the number of months worked and the workers' relationship to the land. But the data will first be presented before these factors are related to changes over time.

The average months worked by stevedoring labourers and gangwaymen were calculated to give some idea of the total amount of labour-time expended over twelve month periods.

FIGURE 6.4

LENGTH OF CONTRACT, 1961/62-1968/69, LABOURERS AND GANGWAYMEN



Source: Record cards survey

The most immediate obvious difference between the length of contract among the workers is the difference of wage differential and skill between stevedoring labourers and gangway/winchmen. Over the whole period (eight years in the case of gangwaymen and seven for labourers)<sup>41</sup> the average contract was 8.52 months per twelve month period for stevedoring labourers as opposed to 10.19 months for gangwaymen. While a full survey of the average contract of black supervisors was

not made, in the year 1961/62 it was 10.17 with many indunas working 11 or 12 months during the twelve month period. Generally specialized workers and supervisors were more 'committed' to wage labour in the stevedoring trade because of their relative experience of the work (necessary to be able to qualify for promotion), and higher wages which provided a greater return on hours worked.

What requires to be explained is the uneven amount of labour-time worked each twelve month cycle. Instead of a steady progression towards ever-increasing contracts each year, the average contracts served fluctuate annually, even declining slightly on average between the first four and the last three years. While these changes could be ascribed to management controlling the cycles of employment, bringing in short contract workers to displace or supplement the longer contract workers, a more powerful determinant of the length of contract seems to be the demand for labour in the docks, and the determination of the workers to maintain and exceed the previous levels of earnings.

TABLE 6.2

CHANGES IN LABOUR-TIME AND TONNAGE LANDED\*  
(percentage)

	Length of contract <sup>1</sup>	Tonnage landed <sup>1</sup>
1962	+	+
1963	-	+
1964	-	+
1965	-	+
1966	+	-
1967	+	-

<sup>1</sup> Changes in the average length of contract are between averages calculated around the mid-point of the year (e.g. 1961/62-1962/63) and those on tonnage landed between each year (e.g. 1961-1962)

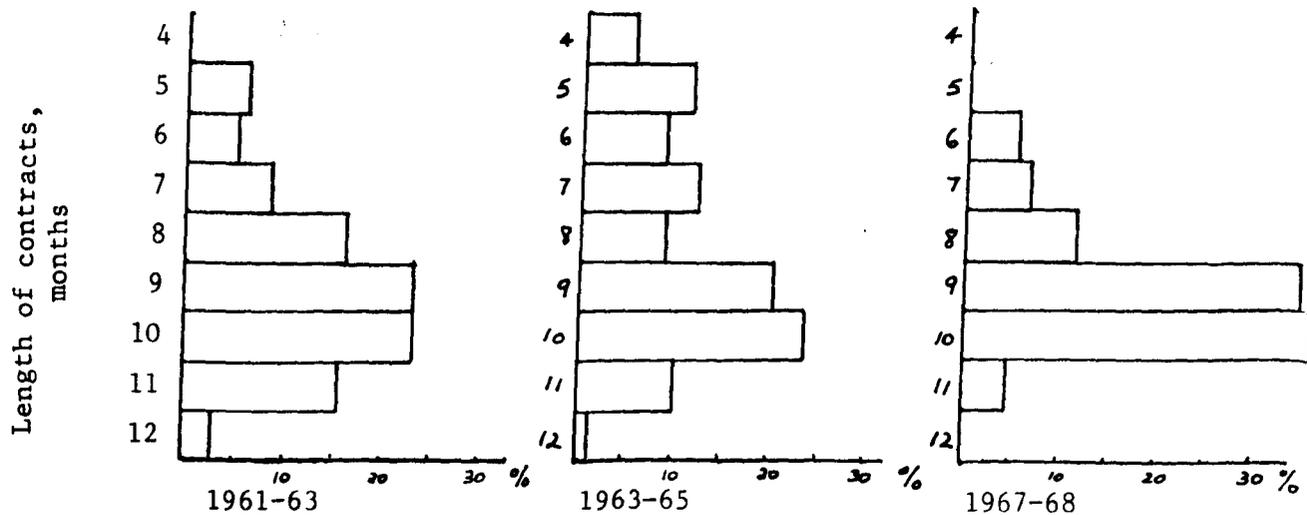
\* Tonnage landed is used as a measure of the demand for stevedoring labour rather than the total tonnage handled in the port as it represents more general cargo requiring the skill and ability of stevedoring labour than the high tonnage and low value bulk exports which are handled at highly mechanized depots.

With the exception of 1962 when there was a small increase in the percentage of tonnage landed, in the years for which data is available on changes in the length of contract, an inverse relationship exists between length of contract and tonnage landed. This can be explained in terms of the determination of the workers to maintain their annual earnings; more than half the wages of the workers being made up of overtime, Sunday pay, and special allowances. During a time of rapidly increasing imports, 1962/66, reaching a record level not yet exceeded <sup>at 8,577 thousand tonnes in 1966, the workers</sup> were likely to be exhausted by long hours but be able to earn slightly more per week (depending also on the Company's ability to draw

more labour from the reserves). Under these conditions the average contract was likely to decline. The opposite effect was likely during a time of contracting tonnage landed, under conditions of slightly less than full employment, workers were likely to stay on longer to earn as much as the previous year.<sup>42</sup> Simultaneously, while the average length of contract was related directly to the intensity of labour in the docks, behind this average differentiation was becoming marked. A number of workers were becoming fully dependent on wage labour and extending their contracts up to 11 months in a 12 month cycle. It is these workers who overall expended more labour time during the year, because of the long hours worked, than those in comparable sectors such as engineering, construction, and electricity generation. While the average length of contract fluctuated each year, these were the workers who steadily extended their time in wage labour or maintained a length of contract approaching the maximum possible under conditions of intensified migrant labour.

FIGURE 6.5

DIFFERENTIATION IN LENGTH OF CONTRACT, STEVEDORING LABOURERS



Source: Survey of record cards

Certain broad trends are evident from the figures: a growing concentration of workers serving 9 or 10 months contract although a marked fall-off in any longer contracts, a temporary increase in short-term contracts during the rapid increase in imports 1963-66, and an eventual grouping of all contracts within the range of 6 to 11 months. The steady elimination of the extra-long contracts (11 and 12 months) suggests that the 10 months contracts constitute the upper limits of expenditure of labour power in the hothouse conditions of the docks. The longer contracts were possibly exhausting the workers and encouraging employers to step up recruitment. The abrupt decline in the short term contracts, 4 and 5 months, in 1967-68 suggests that a core of workers, particularly specialized workers, were being consolidated, particularly towards the end of the 1960s, who were experienced at dock work and steadily becoming as dependent on wage labour as urban workers. This transformation in the workforce, the accelerated pace of proletarianization, was impelled by capital's need for higher levels of exploitation from a smaller labour force.

#### Attachment to the land and 'peasant-workers'

While the whole direction of capitalist exploitation was to draw workers to the city, to increase the level of exploitation by lengthening the working day and contract of service, a counter force within capital repelled the workers at the termination of their contract. The argument that the regime of absolute surplus value limited severely the development of urbanization among

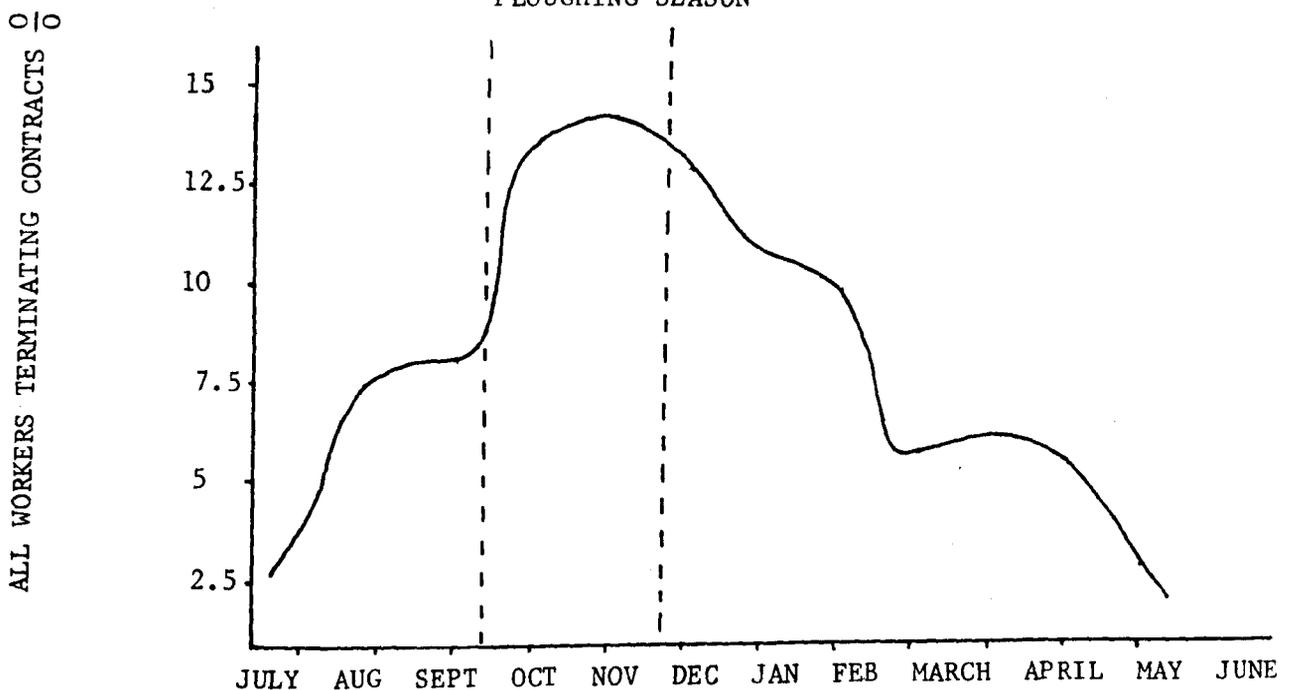
stevedoring workers has already been presented. Long working hours in the docks depended on the effective separation of the worker from his family, but the continuation of the migratory system depended on the periodic return of the worker to the homestead both to rest and to oversee the remnants of an agricultural subsidy to wage labour. In response to the quickened pace of growth of an urban proletariat in the 1960s, added to by migrants 'going over' to urban life by squatting or being absorbed in the townships, the state made an annual return to the reserves a legal obligation.<sup>43</sup> Capital depended both on the material addition to subsistence of the workers' families on the land (not least of which made rent an unnecessary item in the composition of the costs of subsistence) *and* increasingly on the ideological control over a sizeable proportion of the African working class through the Bantustans.

While the objective conditions of wage labour were tearing workers away from an orientation towards and dependence upon the land, the migratory labour system depended on some form of attachment to the land, limited though it might be. As in the case of length of contract, a survey of the stevedoring workers' relative attachment to the land has to take into account the differentiation between the absolutely landless who view the reserves as a rural township, between those who are bound by kin ties and the necessity of accommodation, and those to whom the ownership of cattle and the production of food still assumes some importance. The average conditions are, however, important in

assessing the general environment in which migratory workers struggle to reproduce themselves. The month in which the contract is terminated by the worker is here taken as a measure of the workers' ability to participate in essential agricultural tasks like that of ploughing. A disproportionate number of workers terminating their contracts shortly before or during the ploughing season would indicate that these workers were able to perform agricultural work despite the powerful pressures of capital towards eliminating seasonal variations in labour supply and a general constant obligation to labour under the command of capital.

FIGURE 6.6

MONTH IN WHICH CONTRACT IS TERMINATED, STEVEDORING LABOURERS



Source: Record card survey aggregating statistics on termination of contract for years 1961/62, 1963/64, 1965/66, 1966/67.

The most obvious point about the termination of contract of the stevedoring workers is that the general conditions are sharply different from the cycle of industrial production which rises steepest towards the end of the year, having an abrupt decline over the holidays, and then a slow decline in the beginning of the following year. As the pace of production speeds up towards the end of the year workers are less inclined to leave and overtime worked is at its highest level. This is then followed by a peak number of workers terminating contract and in January by the highest number of workers signing on again.<sup>44</sup> What is noticeable in the case of the stevedoring sample is that there is not a sharp disjuncture between workers leaving in December and in January; January is the fourth most common month for workers to leave employment. During the ploughing season, which varies between mid-September to mid-November (roughly two months) more than 40 per cent of the workers terminated their contract.<sup>45</sup> What was also unusual was the decline in the number of workers leaving employment between November and December. The opposite tendencies are shown in the months June and July when only 6.4 per cent of the workers terminated their contracts. The general cycle of termination of service in the period October to December and engagement during June and July is in conformity with the seasons when male labour is most and least needed in the reserves.

These, however, are the average conditions in the relationship of wage labour to agricultural production and an examination of the data over time shows significant variations and

a distinct movement towards the industrial pattern of employment. This, it is argued, is a consequence of the growing dependence of the workers on wage labour which suppresses the seasonal variation in labour supplies. In the docks which work without an annual break (as in the case of manufacturing, building, and construction), capital is demanding steady supplies of labour throughout the year. Only the export of agricultural commodities follows a seasonal pattern, and exports of these products are the greater proportion of cargo handled in Cape Town. During a time of rising unemployment as in the later 1960s the inclination of workers to plough and maintain a rural orientation is increasingly threatened by the possibility of not being re-engaged. By extending working hours in the docks the employers were wrenching workers away from strictly seasonal work. The tendency of rising lengths of contract of service was to place the full burden of what agricultural production was still possible in the reserves fully on to the shoulders of the women in the homestead.<sup>46</sup>

TABLE 6.3

MONTH OF TERMINATION OF CONTRACT BY YEAR, STEVEDORING  
LABOURERS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Ju	Jly	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1961/62	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	-
1963/64	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+
1965/66	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
1966/67	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	+

Source: Record card survey, + above average figure for termination  
- below average figure for termination

A yearly analysis of the month of termination does not reveal a fundamental shift during the 1960s in the average pattern over this period: June and July remain the months during which the workers are least likely to terminate their contract and October to December the most likely. What change is evident is that the peaks and valleys of movement of the workers become more pronounced over time, that above average departures between March and May become eliminated and concentrated towards the end of the year. What is even more significant is the movement of the highest departures per month steadily towards the end of the year, more in conformity with the pattern of industrial employment. In 1961/62 October was the month of highest departure, in 1963/64 October, November and December were equally important, in 1965/66 November, and in 1966/67 December.

Taking the evidence on the lengthening contract of service, the rising demand for labour in the docks, and the tendency for change within the seasonal variation towards the industrial pattern, it is argued that a core of workers existed within the workforce completely dependent on wage labour for their families' livelihood. The general conditions of the stevedores were those of a section of the African working class increasingly dependent on wage labour and detached from the land. Despite management's adoption of a strategy of long-range migration, with the new workers from the reserves supplementing an increasingly exhausted workforce, the core of migrant workers totally dependent on wage labour was needed by

the DSLSC as a reservoir of the collective skills of the workforce. These workers were conscious of their added powers and their central position in the labour process.

### Earnings and the Wage Board

Because of its importance, the wage issue is taken up here only after the labour process, length of contract, and the system of long-range migration have been discussed. It was the persistent demands of the workers for wage increases during the 1950s which provided the impetus for the formation of the DSLSC and the suppression of working class action in the docks. As wages formed such a large part of total costs in stevedoring, during the conditions of intensified labour and lengthened hours during the 1960s, employers were determined to reduce the cost of labour. Apart from the suppression of working class resistance in the docks, employers could keep wage costs to a minimum by taking on as few workers as were necessary, lengthening hours, and introducing labour-saving mechanization.

Yet it was precisely as the DSLSC came effectively in control of resistance and the supply of labour that the Wage Board became active in investigating wages and in proposing increases. Under conditions of national oppression of African workers and intensified labour in the docks, the intervention of the state through the Wage Board may appear as contradictory. Given the increasing efficiency of the army of officials in channelling labour to the lowest wage sectors and the determination of

employers to reduce labour costs to a minimum in the struggle to maximise profits why should wages be raised at all? As the mass movements of political resistance and the trade unions had been smashed through intense repression and legal prohibition, or reduced to insignificance by bannings, the pressure was not coming from political or working class organizations. Given a declining strike rate after the industrial battles of the 1950s, the nation-wide insurrectionary movement in 1960, and the stay-at-homes, the pressure was not coming directly from the workers either in spontaneous strike movements. The increased activity of the Wage Board in the stevedoring trade has to be related to its activity as a whole to be able to get some answer to these questions.

The increased activity of the Wage Board in the later 1950s can be directly related to the bus boycotts, stay-at-homes, and the campaign organized by the South African Congress of Trade Unions for £1 a day. These demands produced in turn a response in the liberal bourgeoisie which argued that some increase in wages should be encouraged to create demand particularly for the products of manufacturing. The reactivation of the Wage Board in 1957 has to be seen in the light of these struggles, as a step towards halting the decline in African real wages, by making investigations, and tentatively suggesting wage increases where high rates of profit were being earned. While the Wage Board is legally entitled to make substantial increases in wages and even through revision of unskilled determinations to 'put a bottom'

to wages of all workers in the major industrial areas, in policy and practice this has never been its aim. A study of the practice of the Wage Board in an earlier period concluded that the wage determinations it issued reinforced the tendency towards a higher organic composition of capital, and its welfarism limited to bringing the smaller capitals under control.<sup>47</sup> The chairman of the reactivated Wage Board in the late 1950s, <sup>W.F.J. Steenkamp,</sup> spelt out its policy in unambiguous terms; rapid increases in wages 'a violent change in the cost of production' were not to be prescribed because they would lead to rising unemployment.<sup>48</sup> Against the arguments of a broadened internal market, an expansion of industrial capacity through the economies of scale, Steenkamp posed the argument of low costs of production. The Wage Board was involved in measuring the interests of capital as a whole in arriving at a minimum wage; while employers in each sector under investigation would plead insolvency if wages were raised, the Wage Board would have to take into consideration the interests of employers as a whole, for instance, the food and garment industries which were likely to benefit from some increase in the wages of the mass of workers. Steenkamp saw the work of the Wage Board as one of gentle upgrading of wages through a policy of 'benevolent paternalism' and as the encouragement of personnel management and he vigorously contested the demands of trade unions.'In all the writer's dealings with black trade unionists...he found them - not unnaturally of course - to be as blind to our unemployment and underemployment problem as are their white compatriots: very large pay rises and a shortening of the working day are their chief concern.'<sup>49</sup> From his view of South Africa as a 'dual economy', a

'peculiar admixture' of the 'mature white free-enterprise economies of the West' and the 'backward black societies of Africa', increased wage rates would only increase unemployment.<sup>50</sup> He advocated increasing the uneven development of South Africa as a means of stimulating black employment through suspending minimum wages in the border areas. Against the general concern of the liberal bourgeoisie in favour of arguments for raising the level of black wages, Steenkamp posed the problem both of unemployment and of method. Increases in black wages should only be encouraged during full employment, and cautiously then.<sup>51</sup> Even if a sound argument could be made generally for increasing wages, Steenkamp disputed whether concrete policy proposals would follow logically:

A lot more of factual investigation and macro-economic estimation must intervene between these two phases of the argument. Whereas this does not mean that we must sit still in the meantime, it does mean that we have to move forward cautiously, guided by the trading results and operating methods of efficient firms and by what general economic indices are available to us.

In short, the most intelligent Chairman of the Wages Board had no solutions to the question of poverty wages for the overwhelming mass of workers in South Africa or the high level of unemployment except through advocating even lower wages in border areas. The strategy of the Wage Board was simply to follow the upward trend in wages in the most capital intensive firms and to even out these wage increases throughout the industry by setting them as the minimum wage, thus putting pressure on less efficient capitals.

This approach is, of course, completely dependent on the phenomenon of 'wage drift' in the most advanced firms which is the extra price for selection and more productive labour. In many industries and services (particularly the municipalities) the upward tendency of black wages did not exist at all. The stevedoring trade was a notable case in point.

The Wage Board has conducted investigations into the stevedoring trade in 1958, 1964, 1968, and 1972; four times in fourteen years. The appearance of regularity, of wage increases being a matter of routine investigation, belies the specific context of each wage investigation. Given the approach of the Wage Board chairman and the function of the Wage Board within the economy as a whole, these investigations were not part of an autonomous state process imposed on the employers but responses to the problems faced by employers in recruiting suitable labour, in compensating for the rises in the cost of living, or in meeting demands for changes in conditions made by the workers. While the Wage Board relies on an approach of encouraging rather than prescribing wage increases, in an attempt to regularize wage increases and increase the workers dependence on employers, the stevedoring employers have struggled to avoid at any stage making wage increases outside the operation of the Wage Board investigations.<sup>53</sup> Quite apart from their determination to keep wage costs to a minimum, employers wanted to avoid if at all possible granting wage increases when workers made demands. Formally, they could argue with the workers and the Department of Labour that they were bound by contract to shipping companies and that all wage increases should be legally

promulgated for them to be able to amend their contracts.

This was the argument made during the Second World War and it did not convince the state officials at the time.<sup>54</sup>

During the strikes of the late 1950s the employers were seen by the workers to make wage increases under pressure without jeopardizing their relationship with the shipping companies. But after the employers had regained full control following the formation of the DSLSC and working class resistance was suppressed, it was more important than ever that increases in wages should be made an 'objective' procedure outside of the control of employers. This would be ideologically important in shifting the focus of workers' demands on to a distant and 'rational' institution of state, rather than their immediate exploiters. The employers could then argue that they would be prepared to pay any wage the Wage Board laid down, but no wage increase would be made until the legal procedures had been completed. In this way any upward drift in wages, even in the small cargo allowances, could be avoided altogether. Any flexibility in the form of the wage, any fissure permitting bargaining between workers and employers would be eliminated. This common approach of all stevedoring employers to the workers was the corollary of the cartel operating between the stevedoring firms in relation to the shipping companies. Identical prices and conditions were tendered, and the rates and percentages applied to tonnages fixed. Any wage increase by one company could have had a ripple effect throughout the trade and strain the cartel arrangement. For all these reasons the employers were not hostile to operating under a wage

determination which regulated wages from an apparently external vantage point, evened out the discrepancies in wages between one firm and another, and eased in wage increases applicable to all firms in the trade.

From 1959 when the DSLSC was formed to 1971, the only time that wages increased was after Wage Board investigations. During these investigations a thorough examination was made of the wages paid, the number of workers employed, and the profits made. This data will be examined during the 1960s to illustrate the effect of wage regulation upon the earnings of workers, and the division of surplus value into the revenue of capitalists and the means of subsistence of the workers.

The early 1960s were marked by a rising growth rate in the gross domestic product, and by a particularly sharp increase in imports. The tonnage of cargo landed by stevedoring workers in Durban rose steadily from 1960 to a record peak, which has not subsequently been matched, of 8,557 thousand tonnes in 1966.\* The rise in production after the post-Sharpeville slump affected stevedoring employers in two ways; it increased the demand for dock labour to handle the huge volume of imports, and simultaneously drew experienced workers into the leading manufacturing sectors. These two

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\*See Appendix A

tendencies reduced the size of the pool of labour immediately available to stevedoring employers and affected the quality of workers. The supply of workers was stated to be sometimes inadequate during peak demand in Cape Town, Durban, and East London, and in Port Elizabeth the pool of stevedoring labourers decreased progressively from the end of 1963. In addition the low wages did not attract sufficient labour 'of the desired quality'.<sup>55</sup> It was in this context that a Wage Board investigation was initiated in 1963.

The Wage Board report which followed provides some insight into the form of wages in stevedoring; the compound of basic rates, daily allowances, overtime, and cargo allowances. The problems in making comparisons between different areas and in working out the actual earnings of the workers are, however, made great by the exemption of the DSLSC from having to present data on the earnings of workers. This exemption provides further evidence of the tolerance of the Wage Board for large employers and the semi-official status of the Company. This omission makes the otherwise comprehensive analysis of wages and employment useless for the purpose of comparing the earnings of workers employed by different companies and in different areas.<sup>56</sup> The most powerful determinant of wages for stevedoring workers was obviously the wages of the SARH workers on the wharf; any increase in stevedoring wages would plainly stimulate a demand for an equal increase by railway workers as was the case in the 1950s.<sup>57</sup> As the Wage Board put it delicately: 'Not only is some of the work done by the stevedoring and railway workers, such as the carrying of articles and the loading on to slings or

platforms for hoisting by cranes, similar in nature, but these groups come into close contact with each other.' As the SARH is a state department managed on the lines of a public utility corporation on a non-profit basis, for the provision of 'cheap transport' to promote the most rapid capital accumulation, a policy of cheap labour is integral to low freight charges.<sup>58</sup> With this dominant interest in maintaining the lowest possible labour costs, the state's and employers' resistance to increased wages combined directly in committees of action during times of crisis. Because the stevedoring workers had always made the most concerted thrust towards ending the poverty wages in the docks, the attention of the employers and state institutions such as the Wage Board and the police was concentrated on suppressing independent working class action and controlling any wage increases which were introduced. The pressure to phase in wage increases through the Wage Board came from the workers themselves although the immediate threat of strike action need not always have been present. Resistance to employers could take the form of finding work elsewhere (during the upward phase of the cycle of boom and slump), go-slows and declining productivity, or reluctance to do the dirtiest and heaviest form of work. The employers were always aware that the rapid decline in earnings through cost of living increases or increasing of demand for workers would make strike action inevitable unless a regular review was made of wages by an external and apparently impartial body. A yawning

gap between what could be termed the 'customary expectations' of earnings in the docks, quite apart from the forward demands of the workers, could create a movement of workers which would cut across the division of workers into 'stevedores' and 'wharf labourers'.

The Wage Board acknowledged that almost without exception workers were paid <sup>no more than</sup> the wages laid down in Wage Determination 183 of 6 February 1959. With the exception of Durban where the DSLSC had been forced to provide a daily allowance of 15 cents for every day worked, as a means of holding on to the most experienced and capable workers, workers had had no wage increases.<sup>59</sup> The wage drift on which the Wage Board relied to test out the wages which could be paid without affecting profits simply did not exist. None of the wage determinations provided graded increases to be introduced annually (as is the case in many industries covered by the Wage Act) and the movement of wages upward took the form of discrete 'leaps' followed by long plateaus. (See Appendix F ). While the Wage Board did not disclose the criteria by which it raised wages, there was no discussion of the needs of workers, of any measure of cost of living, but only of the employers' readiness to accept increases. Employers were agreed on the need for wages to be increased because of periodic shortages of labour, and more particularly because the right quality of labour was not attracted to stevedoring employment. The Wage Board adopted a special approach with the DSLSC; instead of raising the weekly wage the daily allowance of

of 15 cents for stevedoring labourers was raised to 50 cents. This point provides a useful illustration of the 'collective bargaining' between employers and state officials. The Wage Board arrived at its decision not autonomously, but in response to the 'unanimous request' of the employers and the Central Native Labour Board, set up to substitute for unregistered African trade unions, a state institution which had been closely associated with the preliminary steps towards the formation of the DSLSC.<sup>60</sup> By approving this method of introducing wage increases, the 'interested parties' and the Wage Board were providing the DSLSC with the cheapest method of financing increases and strengthening its punitive powers.<sup>61</sup> The daily allowance was cheap for stevedoring employers for two reasons. It lessened the wage bill by a proportion equal to the earnings of workers saved on days work was not available, and possibly as importantly, it lowered the overtime and Sunday pay rates as a proportion of the basic wage rates. What was granted with one hand in the form of a daily allowance was removed with the other; *the reduction* in overtime and Sunday and public holiday rates. What was required as an inducement to labour after the overtime ban in 1958 could be proportionately reduced as the DSLSC and the state brought workers more effectively under control in the 1960s.

TABLE 6.4

PROPORTIONS OF WAGE COMPONENTS, DURBAN STEVEDORING  
LABOURERS

	Basic wage, normal time, cents/hour	Overtime, basic wage = 100	Sunday and public holidays, basic wage = 100
6 Feb. 1959	12.5	180	219
- 1963	14.4	156	190
24 July 1964	18.8	133	171
3 April 1969	21.7	133	174

Source: WD 183, WD 251, WD 308. The basic wage is calculated by adding the daily allowance for six days to the weekly wage and dividing the total by 48 hours ordinary time. The Sunday and public holiday wage is based on an 8 hour day.

Through the determined strikes of the late 1950s the workers had achieved wage rates on overtime and Sunday time which were even higher than those in the most highly organized industries such as printing and engineering.<sup>62</sup> The Factories Act which lays down minimum conditions in relation to hours, sets overtime rates at time and a third.<sup>63</sup> The stevedoring workers in the early 1960s were earning overtime at more than time and two-thirds, and Sunday wages at more than double time. These levels had been won by refusing to work overtime and by making specific demands for overtime and Sunday rates, not simply accepting a proportional adjustment. But the employers only agreed to these higher rates, it is argued, because the basic wage was not increased at all. With the wage adjustment forced on the DSLSC in 1963 in an effort to retain the most capable workers who were being attracted to other sectors with higher wages, total earnings increased but the proportion of the overtime and Sunday rates started to decline. When

the Wage Board accepted the argument of the DSLSC that basic wages should not be increased in 1964, but the daily allowance increased, the proportions declined even further. The Wage Board found it 'somewhat unusual' that specific amounts should be laid down for overtime and Sunday work (usually these rates are simply regulated by laying down their proportions to basic wages) but acknowledged that 'this principle has become entrenched'. In an ambiguous statement it wrote: 'In view of the increased wages the Board is recommending, the amounts payable in respect of overtime and Sunday work are being appropriately adjusted.'<sup>64</sup> What was camouflaged by this sentence was that while increases were being made in the overtime and Sunday rates, the proportion of both these rates in terms of the basic wage was being adjusted downwards. What was being argued was that wage increases justified a change against the interests of the workers. In effect the Wage Board carried through a reduction in overtime rates from more than time and two-thirds to the standard time and a third, and in Sunday time from more than double time to just above time and two-thirds.

Before examining the demands of workers and employers and discussing the precise increase in wages agreed to by the employers and put into effect through the Wage Board there are two other issues to examine. The first is the extent to which national regulation of wages through a state institution such as the Wage Board tends to even out the difference in wages between industrial centres. The second is the question of whether the wage investigations accentuate or even out the wage differentials among the workers.

Although the Wage Act sets out a number of criteria for the Wage Board to take into account before making a recommendation, it does not lay down an obligation to set national wages throughout industry which would even out the differences between the principal industrial districts. The emphasis of the criteria is on procedures rather than principles.<sup>65</sup> The policy as spelt out by the former chairman of the Wage Board was in fact to increase wage differentials between the industrial centres and the border areas, to fix wage rates at levels 'favourable' to the increased employment of African workers.<sup>66</sup> With this emphasis it is unlikely that the disparities between the wages of workers in different areas employed in the same industry and doing the same work would become equalized. Trade unions under capitalism struggle for a national market in labour power in which differences in wage and working conditions are reduced and in which the organization of the workers puts an end to the constant tendency of capital to reduce the cost of labour where the workers' resistance is weakest. For employers differences in wages are an important element of competitive capitalism; areas of lower wages enable firms employing more workers to compete with more technologically advanced firms. For these firms a proportional difference in wages is natural, an article of faith, customary, and necessary for an increase in employment. The attitude of the Wage Board to this issue is an important indicator of its inclination to reform the existing wage system.

In the stevedoring trade the level of wages follows the general wage pattern for labourers; highest in the Cape (where labourers have been better organized and Coloured labourers are paid slightly higher to differentiate them from the mass of black workers)

and lowest in Durban (where migratory labour is most extensively employed). The Wage Board had to face the contradiction, however, that the workers who handled the most cargo and worked the longest hours were the worst paid, earning even less than the workers at the relatively less important ports of East London and Port Elizabeth. In 1958 the Wage Board argued there should be no necessary connection between the tonnages of cargo handled per worker (highest in Durban) and the level of wages. It is argued that Durban had more bulk cargo which was relatively easier to handle mechanically, and therefore less manual labour was needed. By implication this justified the lower wages paid.<sup>67</sup>

The justification for the 'bottom of the rung' wages paid to Durban workers was according to the Wage Board the fact that the workers were housed in a compound and did not have any transport costs. Because average wages were higher in other sectors in Durban than in East London the Wage Board grouped the wage rates for these areas together.<sup>68</sup> The realignment of area differentials reduced the difference in daily wages paid between Cape Town and Durban from 82 to 90 per cent. But by accepting the daily allowances in Durban instead of prescribing a general increase in weekly wages the Board weakened the tendency towards uniformity in wages decisively. Even if Durban workers were employed a full six days a week their basic wages would still amount to 90 per cent of Cape Town wages; the uppermost limit on parity. These wage differentials carried through to all other components of wages; overtime and Sunday pay and cargo allowances.

The differentials between workers in different occupations may be viewed from a variety of standpoints. At one level they are the price that capital has to pay for the experience and training of workers for particular occupations.<sup>69</sup> But they are also a means by which workers are divided, 'marked off' from other workers, and the collective capacity of the workers is rewarded only to a few occupations. The whole process of dividing workers into different occupations with corresponding wages was late in becoming developed in stevedoring. It was only with the formation of the DSLSC that the classification and grading of workers became institutionalized; previously the workers were seen as a relatively undifferentiated mass. As Steenkamp has written, Wage Board investigations are intended to stimulate the grading and selection of workers and strengthen personnel management.<sup>70</sup> In response to the demands from employers for precise job definitions the wage determinations expanded the number of jobs for which wages were laid down from nine in 1959 to thirteen in 1969, including drivers, foremen, gangwaymen, indunas, leaders, learner stevedores, liaison indunas or serangs, maize trimmers, mobile hoist operators, senior indunas or serangs, stevedoring hands, storemen, and winchmen.<sup>71</sup> While some new jobs sprang from the nature of the mechanization being introduced, the largest group of occupations were concerned with the supervision of the stevedoring labourers.<sup>72</sup> The conflict between these workers and the stevedoring labourers has been the stuff of working class struggles in the docks as employers attempt to withdraw from the immediate supervision of the workplace and retain a certain reserve as an apparently reasonable arbiter. The increasingly black 'front line' supervisors were handed the responsibility of day-to-day pace of work. The numbers of black supervisory workers did not necessarily expand, but their powers *did*.

In the docks the special tasks of black supervisory workers have made the contradiction between them and the mass of workers as much an issue for open dispute as with white foremen. While strike action has always been directed against employers, who wield the immediate social power against the workers, and the state, which supports the decisions of the employers and actively suppresses the industrial and political organization of the workers, it has also exposed the collaborative role of the black supervisors. A central theme running through the demands expressed by the stevedoring labourers has been the difference between themselves and their immediate supervisors: the African indunas. While the national oppression of the African people has created the opportunity for supervisory workers and the African petty bourgeoisie to say 'We are all oppressed', every forward movement of the workers has sharpened the differences in class position among the oppressed. The history of struggle in the docks has brought out the immediate contradictions between the supervisors and the supervised as a secondary conflict to the primary struggle with the employers.<sup>73</sup> In this context the wage differentials between the supervisory and labouring workers are important, as well as the tendency for employers to create a series of intermediary rungs to heighten the differentiation among the workers.

The inception of the DSLSC was marked by a bitter struggle between employers and the labourers over the question of wage increases for indunas while no increases were made in the wages of the labourers. These increases were made in the interests of

the employers gaining full command over the workers, binding the partially autonomous indunas to the new form of authority in the docks. This period saw an increase in the wage differentials between black supervisors and the labourers who earned 54.5 per cent of the basic wage of the indunas. Subsequent determinations have tended to narrow somewhat the gap in wages between all supervisors and the labourers.

TABLE 6.5 WAGE DIFFERENTIALS, SUPERVISORS AND LABOURERS\*

	Foreman	Induna	Labourer	Induna/labourer
WD 183 1959	100	42	23	55
WD251 1964	100	45	30	67
WD308 1969	100	39	26	67
WD348 1972	100	45	31	69

\*Wage differentials calculated on the minimum basic wages (weekly wage plus daily allowance) assuming six days worked per week.

Note: The last column measures the percentage of the induna's wage earned by the labourers.

The statistics bring out some of the problems in considering wage differentials apart from the changes in the labour process, the actual earnings of workers, and the effective command over the workers of the employers. Purcell, after making a thorough statistical study of wage differentials in minimum wage rates laid down by the Wage Board, concluded that wage determinations had no real effect in narrowing the skilled/unskilled wage differential.<sup>74</sup>

The Wage Board's decisions in the stevedoring trade reflect the increasing command of the employers over the mass of workers; as the DSLSC came to control more effectively the supply and demand for labour through a centralized management, the need to reward the indunas for their work declined. Correspondingly, as the black supervisors increasingly took over the overall supervision on the ships, the more capable indunas could be promoted to the 'senior induna' category with a higher wage. The long term trend was therefore one of gradual decline of the wage differential between labourer and induna. The question of the wages of the white foremen provides an insight into the way the Wage Board both 'ratifies' the interests of the employers and presents an impression of change in important areas of dispute, such as the wage gap between black and white. The Wage Board consistently has prescribed minimum wages for foremen which are considerably below their weekly earnings.<sup>75</sup> During a time in which employers were concerned to lower the overall cost of supervision, the Wage Board prescribed a wage which did not protect the position of the white foremen while simultaneously giving the impression that black supervisors and labourers were improving their position relative to the foremen. By this method the Wage Board narrows the black/white wage gap through holding down white wage increases. This is not an insignificant and statistical point as this trend is apparent in all wage determinations, this policy both increases the dependence of white workers on their employers and more importantly keeps the highest prescribed wage rate at about the lowest wage paid for the job.<sup>76</sup> This

principle is important in an increasingly fluid work situation, as it would enable employers eventually to bring in African workers as foremen at the minimum rather than the going rate for the job. Prescribing minimum wage rates in this way enabled employers to keep the overall wages paid at their lowest level.<sup>77</sup>

While all employers are concerned with occupational wage differentials as a means of rewarding certain classes of worker without raising the overall wage bill significantly, the occupational hierarchical structure also serves important ideological purposes. With the advance of mechanization in the docks certain work became 'graded', that is distinguished from labouring work. The graded work did not necessarily command more than the most petty wage differential. What was more important for the employers was that the workers who had been selected to take on the new work should consider themselves in a substantially different position from the 'common labourers'. Their differentiation could be important during crises such as strikes if it would lead to the graded workers standing to one side, and the DSLSC requested the Wage Board to make provision for workers such as maize trimmers, fork lift truck drivers, and particularly winchmen. In many ways the winchmen provide a good example of the way in which the employers strove to separate graded workers from other labourers and graded workers. While WD183 of 1959 defined a winchmen simply as 'an employee who operates a winch', by the 1964 wage investigation the DSLSC was insisting on providing a wage differential between the winchmen and

gangwaymen as it had introduced in the daily allowance.<sup>78</sup>

The management and the workers it permitted to present their views at the sitting pressed strongly for a wage differentiation. They argued that in Durban the winchmen had to operate more powerful winches and to move larger quantities of cargo. In the other ports it was said the winchmen only did the 'breaking out', that is dragging the cargo from the wings to the square of the hold. While in other ports there was opposition to dividing the winchmen from the gangwaymen the Wage Board conceded the demand of the DSLSC and agreed to make a 'slightly higher allowance' for winchmen 'to mark a difference between them and gangwaymen.'<sup>79</sup> While the basic wages remained equal, the daily allowances, overtime rates, and Sunday rates, were changed to give winchmen in Durban the edge over gangwaymen and over the labourers. The DSLSC returned to this demand during the 1968 investigation, that the work of the winchmen should be redefined and rewarded at a higher wage rate. In the wage determination which followed the work of a winchman was extended to include that of a gangwayman (giving directional signals) and to take in specific new tasks such as operating a ship's crane.<sup>80</sup> The wage differentiation applied only to Durban. From being equal in 1959 the petty wage differentiation increased with each determination; winchmen's basic wages being 3 per cent greater than gangwaymen's in 1964, 5 per cent in 1969, and 14 per cent greater in 1972.<sup>81</sup>

By 1969 a simple division of the workers into supervisors and supervised no longer applied. There was considerable differentiation between black manual workers, black operators,

black supervisors, white clerical workers and white supervisors. The occupational and wage hierarchy took the following form: from the bottom upwards, stevedoring labourers, leaders, fork lift truck drivers, gangwaymen, winchmen, grain trimmers (a considerable gap in wage rates), liaison induna, induna, driver, senior induna (a further wage gap), assistant foremen, storemen and foremen. These divisions among the workers were social rather than technical, and their introduction accelerated by the Wage Board.

#### 'Collective bargaining' and national oppression

A feature of the operations of the Wage Board which has always attracted unregistered black trade unions has been its open nature. Public sittings are held at which the workers' representatives can place before the employers and the Board the demands of the workers. This is one of the few areas in industrial legislation (which subordinates African workers out of collective bargaining) which can provide a legitimate platform for the demands of the workers to be presented and some form of recognition granted to trade unions not registered with the state. In the 1940s and again in the late 1950s, black trade unions took advantage of the Wage Board sittings to put forward demands for a living wage and the transformation of conditions of service. While in the 1940s black trade unions could turn the procedures of the Wage Act into a form of collective bargaining, by the late 1950s the state was acting to suppress all manifestations of working class organization and the unregistered

.trade unions got a hostile or at best polite hearing.

During the 1960s when the largest federation of unregistered trade unions, SACTU, was being suppressed, open mobilization of workers' demands was halted. The representation of workers at Wage Board sittings became reduced to indunas and to members of works committees the employers allowed to attend (the sittings are invariably held during working hours).

During periods of intense industrial struggle with strikes threatened in the industries under review, the Wage Board sittings offered to the unregistered trade unions some means of confronting the employers directly and having a state institution which could possibly make some revision in wages and conditions. This was the closest that the mass of workers in South Africa came to collective bargaining, and with the suppression of the working class and national movements, the wage investigations became introspective exercises by employers and a specialized organ of state. The problem for employers was that by the late 1960s as the number of workers taking strike action began to increase, it was important that the wage investigations appear to permit worker representatives and the final determinations actually make some changes. Without some increase in wages and improvement in conditions the wage investigations would be shown to be an obscure activity on the part of the employers with no significance for the workers. Industries such as stevedoring where the workers had taken militant action to support their demands were vulnerable to the radical disillusionment of workers in all of the operations of the employers and the Wage Board. Some changes would have to be

made to prove that the employers were not acting in bad faith, and that the impartial and external organ of state had their interests at heart.<sup>82</sup>

As we have mentioned, the intervention of the Wage Board in laying down minimum wages in the stevedoring trade led to increased differentiation among workers, changed the basis for composition of the wage against the interests of the workers,<sup>83</sup> and did little to reduce differentials between ports. If anything, the latter were more entrenched than ever before through the acceptance of the daily allowance as part of the basic wage. If the Wage Board investigations were, however, a straightforward adjustment of conditions against the interests of the workers it would lack all credibility among the workers and spur them into action. There are two primary areas in which the Wage Board does respond to the long-standing demands of the workers by making concessions and reforms: in the overall level of wages and in certain important conditions of service. The employers supported, and indeed called for significant changes to be made in these areas. Their action can be seen as 'pre-emptive' of revolutionary wage and other demands being made by the workers. The function of the Wage Board in this context was to take over the responsibility of all the stevedoring employers and calculate a wage which would not affect profit margins but would also at a minimum stop the decline in real earnings and provide incentives and inducements for more intensive work in the docks.

Before the employers strategy for adjustments in wages and conditions is examined, it is important to retrace the demands of the workers and their trade unions during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The demands of the workers, reflecting their fundamental aspirations, present the most obvious contradiction to capital in the docks and provide a measure of the underdeveloped nature of 'collective bargaining'. The organization of workers is suppressed, employers refuse to negotiate, and the only concrete 'industrial' demands which can be put to the employers are at the Wage Board sittings. The employers are forced to respond to the elimination of any open organization by substituting a form of company unionism, selected black supervisors and graded workers, to put forward some demands which could be met through the wage reviewing of the Wage Board. In turn, the employers put forward requests to the Wage Board which lead to the change in certain conditions of work which are crucial to providing the appearance of vitality in the bureaucratic procedures of the Wage Act. The Wage Board is, of course, not neutral in relation to the submission of demands and requests from the three types of parties: the trade unions, collaborators, and employers; and attempts to strengthen the position of the employers. This action is not, however, without its contradictions as the relationship between wage adjusting procedures and strikes have shown.

Open trade union demands have never characterized the stevedoring trade except for short bursts of activity during relatively favourable conditions of class struggle. In assessing these relatively short periods of open trade union organization among the mass of African workers, the ruling class has argued that this is evidence of the incapacity of African workers to sustain modern industrial organization and that the mass of workers remain in conditions of tribal backwardness.<sup>84</sup> The repression of all forms of class organization among African workers is not acknowledged, nor, as importantly, the comprehensive measures taken to reproduce a migrant labour force and to control African workers ideologically. Neither does this view recognize the increasingly sophisticated methods used by employers to disorganize collective action by workers; personnel management, works committees, and human relations ideology. Both the repression and employer co-optative strategies, it will be argued, have led to the formation of underground organization strongly resistant to both forms of class suppression.

The wage investigation in 1958 was the first and last time that unregistered trade unions representing the mass of workers in the docks were able to present these demands to the employers and Wage Board. The local committee of SACTU attended the Durban sitting, and at Port Elizabeth the Dock Workers' Union. These two unions presented demands for a wage of R2.50 a day for Stevedoring labourers, a higher wage for winchmen, and a wage for indunas between 20-30 per cent above that of the stevedoring labourers. In Durban, SACTU pressed for an end to casual labour

and for the workers to be employed on a weekly basis.<sup>85</sup> The remnants of the Cape Town Stevedore and Dock Workers Union made rather lower wage demands of R1.90 for labourers. The class character of the Wage Board was clear in its contempt for the demands of the Dock Workers' Union and the SACTU local committee in Durban. The Wage Board argued that these unions had pressed for wage increases but had 'found themselves in the embarrassing position of having no real knowledge of the work and practices involved.' It attempted to drive a wedge between the workers and their representatives. 'The result was that some suggestions were advanced which the Board had every reason to believe did not represent the wishes of the workers actually engaged in stevedoring work.'<sup>86</sup> The unregistered trade unions were in this way undermined by the Wage Board on the grounds of incompetence as representatives of the workers, as 'outsiders' to the labour process, and as general rather than industrial organizations. The report creates the illusion that reasonable collective bargaining with free access to information was an alternative to militant demands. This had historically only been possible for a limited period in the industrial council in Cape Town, and the wage demands made at this port conform more closely to a 'negotiating stance'. Union representatives in this part demanded a wage for labourers closer to the existing level (the wage demands in the other centres being about double the existing wage); requested increasing differentiation between gangwaymen and winchmen; and a lower wage for the black supervisors than demanded at other centres. None of the unions demanded that wage differentials be abolished. The wage demands for winchmen ranged between 8 and 20 per cent higher than that of the labourers, and those of the indunas

between 20 and 47 per cent above the labourers' wage demand. The Cape Town workers demands reflected a different tempo of class section from the other ports, not taking up the slogan of 'fl a day' which was the basic wage demand of SACTU, and requesting increasing differentiation among the workers. These demands were related to the possibility (though rapidly fading under increasing repression) of collective bargaining in the Cape docks in the industrial council of workers and employers.<sup>87</sup> The local committees of SACTU in Durban and the Dock Workers' Union in Port Elizabeth put forward demands for raising substantially the labourers' wage and reducing the difference between the wages of labourers and indunas (Appendix D ).

The early 1960s were characterized by the most severe repression of working class and national organizations, mass arrests, bannings, political trials, and other forms of counter-action to the rising swell of resistance to the apartheid state. The dock area became a crucial arena for political control as workers came out in strike action particularly in the Cape. Instead of the organizational work of SACTU in the docks being able to expand, the organization of the mass of South Africa's workers was forced back to the offices, and finally out of open existence. Underground working class organization took form but faced enormous problems in mobilizing workers politically and in terms of industrial demands. The priorities of all resistance to the apartheid state and the ferocity of repression tended to put the organization of workers in strategic sectors of the economy as a secondary issue to the overriding importance of engaging in armed resistance to the state. The fragile networks of social relationships holding the

stevedoring workers in touch with the wider nationally organized movement snapped, and the militants turned towards an underground strategy which involved securing their positions at work and taking up day-to-day issues. These demands would, however, have to be pursued within the confines of the docks as 'bridging' contacts with other workers through trade unions became increasingly difficult and dangerous.

In the wage investigations of 1964 and 1968 representation by open trade unions representing the mass of workers in the stevedoring trade was no longer possible. The strategy of the employers, possibly stung into action by the demands made in 1958, was to permit black supervisors, gangwaymen, and winchmen to represent the workers. During the investigations these selected workers made requests for changes which would both consolidate their own position and provide some amelioration in conditions of employment for the others. The DSLSC safety committee appeared to provide make up most of the 'employee representatives' at the Wage Board sittings in Durban and presented a definite spectrum of workers' requests. Without some form of worker representation at the sittings the chances of the new wage determinations being rejected by the workers were considerably raised. The employers could argue that representations from the workers were taken into consideration by the Wage Board and that the outcome was thus reasonable.<sup>88</sup> For what it was worth, the worker representation encouraged by management would be likely to create illusions even among a minority that improvements could be expected from the benevolent decisions of employers and the Wage Board. In this way the employers

could hope to divide the workers and create a minority who would be opposed to militant demands and united class action, and thus weaken the impulse to strike.

The employee representatives from the DSLSC were encouraged by their employers to make representations at the Wage Board sitting and their memorandum (with which management was in full agreement) was typed by company clerks in 1968. The investigation during that year provides a useful illustration of the pressures and counter-pressures exerted during wage investigations where trade union organization is suppressed but employers forced to respond to the historic demands of the workers for a living wage. The employee representatives requested changes in their conditions of service which would strengthen their own positions, but also ameliorate certain specific difficulties experienced by all the workers. Significantly, the indunas and graded workers did not put forward any specific wage demand but rather requested a general increase in wages to combat the rising cost of living. This nebulous request showed the limited pretensions of the collaborators who did not aspire to present trade union demands. A precise wage demand could have caused both themselves and their employers real difficulties: a wage slightly above the existing level would be decisively rejected by the workers and held up to ridicule, while a higher wage would be repudiated by the employers. The other requests made by the collaborators concentrated on the variable components of the

· stevedores' wage: increase in special cargo allowances, for oxides to be included in the definition of 'dirty cargo' and thus paid for at a higher rate, and that travelling allowances be made. None of these requests posed any challenge to the employers who did not oppose them, but they would give the impression to the workers that the wage investigations could benefit the workers in certain important areas. The sectionalism of the employee representatives is shown by their request that the wage of a winchman be increased more than that of a gangwayman. By pressing for petty differentiation between the graded workers, these representatives accentuated the egotism of more skilled workers without compensating at all by raising general class demands. While the overwhelming majority of the workers were concerned about large increases in the basic wage rates, the collaborators were requesting more divisions between the workers. A demand such as this would attempt to strengthen the dependence of the graded workers on the employers (who supported this request) and separate them from the mass of the stevedoring labourers. It would also, however, reduce the credibility of the collaborators in the eyes of most of the workers who would see the employee representatives as a self-seeking collaborative pressure group unable to put forward the fundamental demands of the labourers, or for that matter, of all workers in the stevedoring trade.

While the 'works committee' (workers approved by management) was not challenged at the 1964 Wage Board sitting, by 1968 the

workers had organized themselves sufficiently to have found that a wage investigation was taking place and sent representatives to the hearing on 24th June.<sup>89</sup> An official of a registered trade union present at the meeting said that this independent group of stevedoring workers was told to leave the meeting by the management, which they were forced to do. The 'works committee' in their absence adopted an ingratiating manner, bowing, and asking the Wage Board to do the best it could for the stevedoring workers.

The new factor at the 1968 wage hearing was the presence of two registered trade unions, the Republic Transport Workers' Union (RTWU) representing Indian and Coloured transport workers, and the co-ordinating body of the reformist Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). The RTWU had been active in organizing Indian fork-lift drivers, pay-loader tractor drivers, and truck drivers, many of whom were employed in the docks. The union had been formed after the Motor Transport Workers' Union had decided to restrict its membership to white workers only. Despite their compliance with every measure of the law, the RTWU officials were under strong pressure from the Security Branch to withdraw from recruiting workers from the dock area and membership had slumped. The union members had, however, established contacts with the African stevedoring workers, which is the possible explanation for the presence of an independent group of workers at the Wage Board hearing. Having been forced to adopt a very cautious strategy of organizing, the RTWU took the Wage Board hearing seriously as a means of keeping up its

struggle to organize all transport workers who could be members of registered unions.<sup>90</sup>

The presence of TUCSA at Wage Board sittings in Durban can be explained by the attempt of the co-ordinating trade union body to speak on behalf of all South African workers, and in particular to orientate some of its activities towards the organization of the unorganized masses. In the late 1960s TUCSA was making tentative moves towards organizing black trade unions on the Rand, and this policy was reflected by the appearance of its officials at Wage Board sittings to represent the workers in industries where no trade union organization existed.<sup>91</sup> At the hearing TUCSA broadly supported the demands of the RTWU without substituting any of its own.

The RTWU presented a comprehensive set of demands on behalf of all workers in stevedoring, from labourers to foremen. These demands if accepted would have virtually doubled the earnings of the labourers and comprehensively reduced the differentials between supervisors and supervised.

TABLE 6.6                      WAGE DEMANDS, DURBAN 1968

Occupation	Weekly wage (R)
Drivers	22.50
Foremen	44.00
Labourers	15.00
Gangway/winchemen	17.00
Leader	16.00
Induna	22.50

Source: WBR, 1968

Although it is not completely unambiguous, it appears as though the demand of R17 a week made on behalf of the labourers meant a rejection of the daily allowance system, and its replacement with a considerably higher basic wage. At this time the earnings of the labourers in Durban, including all allowances and overtime, were R9.00 a week.<sup>92</sup>

The highest increases in wages proposed were those applying to the labouring work, and the RTWU also demanded overalls for all workers, an increased special cargo allowance, and increased overtime rates. The stevedoring employers responded to these comprehensive demands by describing them as 'excessive and unrealistic'. Their main weapon against these sweeping demands was the works committee which repudiated the representations made by the RTWU and claimed that they and not the RTWU were representative of the African workers.<sup>93</sup>

Because the wage determinations, unlike in other industries, fundamentally affect the wages and working conditions of the workers and the cost structure of the industry, the employers were active in presenting their proposals for change. Rather than adopting a completely reactionary posture, rejecting all proposals which would increase wages, the employers, and particularly the DSLSC, were prepared to make certain changes. An apparently enlightened management would command more respect from certain workers and ensure the loyalty of the graded workers in particular. The employers at the 1968 Wage Board sitting accepted all the requests for increased differentiation of the workers and redefinition of the work of winchmen. The DSLSC went

even further in its 'enlightenment' and proposed that Republic Day be made a paid public holiday. The main emphasis of the employers was, however, to increase the differentiation of workers, with a subsidiary concern for limiting the extra demands on the time of stevedoring workers. The most important area of concern of the DSLSC was the winchmen. The company insisted that the definition of the winchman's work be widened to include the operation of a ship's crane. The employers' concern with the winchmen could have arisen from their claim that they were now doing more responsible work and should be rewarded correspondingly. By changing the definition of the work and not opposing the works committee's request for a wage differential between winchmen and gangwaymen, the DSLSC possibly thought this source of dissatisfaction could be removed. The other areas where increased differentiation was proposed were in black supervision and new mechanization. The DSLSC proposed to meet the shortage of white supervisors in the docks by considerably expanding the work of black supervisors with new titles and higher wage rates. Overall, the substitution would reduce the wage bill for supervision and increase efficiency. The senior indunas drawn from the pool of graded workers would improve communication and speed up the work. The main criteria for their promotion would be age and experience, although these would not be the only ones, and the company could afford to be highly selective.<sup>94</sup> Although this was not stated at the Wage Board sitting, the senior indunas would take over the work of the hatchman. The other supervisory job to be

requested was the liaison induna whose work was to keep the employers in touch with the work on the ships and act as a kind of authoritative messenger and informer. The liaison indunas were also to intervene in minor disputes and report any problems to the personnel management.<sup>95</sup>

The major innovation requested was the replacement of the work of a hatchman (significantly never defined in a wage determination) with a senior induna. The white hatchman was rapidly disappearing from work on the ships because of the long hours and unrewarding pay. The ex-seamen who had been preferred for this work were increasingly being replaced by white workers who had no shipping experience or knowledge of foreign languages. By the late 1960s there was a high turnover of these workers who were not provided with training for the work. The upward movement of promotion for white workers from hatchman, to learner foreman, and then finally foreman, was breaking down, and the senior induna was to take over most of this work. He would be paid a wage less than a half of that of a white foreman.

The question of work appropriate to the new level of mechanization in the docks was raised by the proposal to define the work of a grain trimmer with a suitable wage rate above that of the labourer and the winchman, but below that of the induna.<sup>96</sup> During the 1960s there was an enormous expansion of maize exports from South Africa, from an average annual level of 796 thousand tons in the period 1956/57 to 1960/61, to 1,388 thousand tons in the period 1961/62 to 1965/66.<sup>97</sup> Durban handled large quantities of this export trade, as much as 1,088 thousand tons in 1964.<sup>98</sup> This work was becoming increasingly mechanized as power driven machinery

was installed to load the ships, the grain being distributed under pressure rather than trimmed by hand by the labourers.

The employers were not only concerned with increased differentiation and grading; requests were made to the Wage Board which indicated an attempt to make use of the wage investigation to define some limit to the hours of work which could be demanded from stevedoring workers. The request that emergency work - that is work outside the times of work laid down in the wage determination (in practice work demanded of the stevedoring labourers over the maximum overtime or on Saturday afternoon) - should be more strictly defined, was made by the employers. They wanted to restrict emergency work to 'work when a ship is on fire or sinking or where there is a danger to life if the work is not done.' The employers were concerned that the workers should not become dissatisfied with the complete lack of control over the hours worked by their employees; these conditions being determined by the SARH. By being made openly to the Wage Board, the request indicates a tension between the stevedoring companies and the shipping companies and SARH, the latter being determined to extend the working day over the maximum if necessary to achieve the fastest turnabout of the ships. The incident shows the extent to which the workers had lost control over the hours worked because of the rigorous discipline imposed by the DSLSC.<sup>99</sup> Finally, the employers asked the Wage Board to lay down that workers should replace any clothing lost or damaged through negligence.

From the evidence of the 1968 wage investigation it is clear that the employers were as concerned as the workers to secure changes in the wage determination in their interests. The employers' 'innovative' approach to the Wage Board; requesting redefinition of jobs, concerned to ensure some concrete changes in conditions of work, and attempting to use the wage determination to reinforce their own rather than other authorities control over stevedoring labour, arose partly from the weakness of the stevedoring companies both in relation to the demands of the workers and to the SARH. By the late 1960s monopoly capital was involved in redesigning the division of labour on the factory floor on its own initiative, employing personnel managers and time and motion studies to achieve the highest levels of productivity.<sup>100</sup> The monopoly companies were developing an increasingly sophisticated division of labour at the operative and artisan levels of work, and were generally critical of the rather crude specifications of the wage determinations. With a relatively low level of mechanization and with management keenly aware that only the strictest discipline over the workers would ensure the continued high profitability of the trade, the process of regrading and differentiation was more likely to be set in motion through external intervention.<sup>101</sup>

#### Profitability and wage demands

The Wage Board, charged with making a study of the profitability of an industry before laying down wage rates, found that the stevedoring companies were highly profitable. The trade did not require a high proportion of funds to be

invested in plant and equipment, and the companies earned their income primarily through deploying labour with only a limited amount of equipment. Because the capital requirements were small in relation to turnover, the rate of return on capital was high - in 1962/63 it amounted to 67 per cent - about three times the rate of return on capital in industry.<sup>102</sup> The Wage Board considered this figure 'exceptionally high' but not of great importance in assessing profitability because of the insignificance of plant and equipment in the labour process. But by every other criteria the stevedoring companies were proved to be as profitable as suggested by the enormous return on capital. Measured both in terms of total costs and turnover, profits are considerable. Despite the high proportion of profits in terms of costs and turnover, the stevedoring trade has not been exempt from the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, a factor which has constantly to be borne in mind in considering the intransigence of the stevedoring employers.

TABLE 6.7      STEVEDORING PROFITS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL COSTS

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1956/1957	1961-62/1962-63	1965-66/1966-67
26.4	20.7	13.6

Source: Wage Board Reports, figures for each year averaged over two year periods.

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Despite the tendency of the rate of profit to decline, this average movement does not bring out the differences between the companies. In 1966-67 only one firm suffered a loss, four had profits of below 10 per cent, while four had profits exceeding

20 per cent on turnover.<sup>103</sup> But while the rate of profit was important in assessing the stevedoring companies over time and in terms of other industries, the mass of profit was crucial in understanding the ability of the stevedoring companies to absorb increased wages.

In 1962-63 the fixed assets of the stevedoring companies consisting of vehicles, plant and equipment, land and buildings, were valued at just over half the profits earned. The mass of profits in the trade was virtually sufficient to replenish all long-term funds in a year's operation.<sup>104</sup> This level of profitability could enable a rapid pace of accumulation should the stevedoring companies have to invest in equipment rather than distribute dividends to shareholders. An analysis of profitability according to the labour theory of value and Marxist theory would view the productive process of loading and unloading ships: a process in which constant capital is conspicuous by its insignificance, in terms of the exploitation of the workers and the division of income into the means of subsistence for the workers, and the rewards of ownership for the capitalists. Marx describes transport as a productive process if, in the movement of commodities, it constitutes a stage in the production of the commodities being transported. Through transportation additional value is transferred to the commodities. Transport workers then, as other productive workers, labour beyond the hours of work in which they earn their means of subsistence and in the remaining hours create surplus value which is appropriated by the capitalists.<sup>105</sup> Marx argues that the primary task in approaching the whole question of profitability is to assess first the rate of surplus value; the rate at which capital

can appropriate a proportion of the product greater than the outlay of expenditure of labour power. Profit then is 'a converted form of surplus value, a form in which its origin and the secret of its existence are obscured and extinguished.'<sup>106</sup> Again, 'if the rate of surplus value is known and its magnitude given, the rate of profit expresses nothing but what it actually is, namely a different way of measuring surplus-value, its measurement according to the value of the total capital instead of the value of the portion of capital from which surplus-value directly originates by way of its exchange for labour.'<sup>107</sup> In Volume I of Capital he sets out the method for calculating the rate of surplus value: by reducing the value of constant capital which re-appears in the product to zero. Only the value that has actually been created in the process of producing the commodity then remains. The amount of surplus value is calculated by deducting from income the constant capital expended in the process of production. The formula  $s/v$  gives the ratio of surplus value to variable capital, that part of capital which is turned into labour-power.

The analysis of the Wage Board of the stevedoring trade provides a basis for evaluating the division of the income of the stevedoring companies into the wages of the workers and the profits of the capitalists. The income of all stevedoring companies during 1962/63 was R3,586 thousand. From this is deducted the expenditure on constant capital - predominantly vehicles, plant and equipment, and land and buildings - which amounted to R358 thousand. From the total income, the value of labour-power expended in the productive process of transport was R3,048 thousand

of which R699,000 was appropriated in the form of profits and directors' fees, and R2,329 thousand remained as wages for the workers and salaried employees.<sup>108</sup> From these figures, the rate of surplus value,  $s/v$ , is 30 per cent. As surplus-value is in the same ratio to variable capital as surplus labour is to necessary labour, the working day can be divided into necessary and surplus labour in the same proportion.<sup>109</sup> The stevedoring workers thus spent two-thirds of their working time in paid labour and a third in unpaid labour.

This method of evaluating the return to capitalists from their command over labour in the docks provides a higher rate of exploitation than that of the Wage Board's calculation in terms of total costs and turnover. That there was not an even larger difference between the two methods of approach; bourgeois political economy basing the rate of return on total capital and a materialist approach relating surplus value to variable capital; is a reflection of the relative insignificance of constant capital in stevedoring.<sup>110</sup> The proportion of total capital expended on labour-power constituted the largest proportion of costs in the stevedoring trade. While the wages of labourers only constituted some 20 per cent of turnover in 1938, by 1962/63 they were 70.5 per cent.<sup>111</sup> The enormous change in the proportion of variable capital in stevedoring reflects the struggle of workers to lower the rate of exploitation in the numerous strikes during the war period and the 1950s. Since the wages of labourers constituted such a large proportion of total costs, employers were likely to resist strongly any substantial increase in wages which would have an immediate effect on the proportion of paid to unpaid labour.

TABLE 6.8 WAGES OF LABOURERS AND OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES

	1956/57	1961-62/1962-63	1965-66/1966-67
As percentage of total costs	79.6	83.5	82.0
As percentage of turnover	63.0	69.2	72.2

Source: Wage Board Reports, wages and salaries paid to clerical and managerial staff excluded, operating expenses include the costs of operating and maintaining the compounds (WBR, 1964: para 26).

The proportion of wages in terms of the operations of the stevedoring companies have shown divergent tendencies over time. As a percentage of total costs wages have shown a slight tendency to decline, although this has not been a uniform development as the figures indicate. As a percentage of turnover a firmer tendency is evident, a steady rise over a long period.<sup>112</sup>

In responding to the demands made upon it, the Wage Board concentrated on a short-term analysis of capital in the stevedoring trade, not searching out the longer term trends in wages or profits. Broadly viewed, the suggestions of the employers were accepted (with some significant exceptions) and some of the requests of the works committee conceded. All the proposals for increased division of labour and differentiation were accepted; the work of winchman was widened to include operating a ship's crane, liaison indunas were provided for, the wages of a winchman were increased above a gangwayman only in Durban, and finally the

the wage for a maize trimmer in East London was made greater than that of a gangwayman. While some important requests made by the DSLSC were readily conceded, one of the most important, the issue of control over emergency work, was rejected. Obviously the Wage Board shied away from attempting to provide any limitation of the power of the SARH. By refusing to intervene in making a definition of emergency work the Wage Board implicitly tolerated the super-exploitation of stevedoring workers who were forced to work over and above the maximum hours of work prescribed in the wage determinations. It did, however, agree to reducing the midnight break during the night shift to half-an-hour, but refused the request of the works committee that a free meal should be provided. In one area it declined to reinforce the disciplinary powers of the DSLSC; its request that workers should replace protective clothing lost or damaged through negligence was turned down. This was not the kind of issue the Wage Board tended to include in determinations; it could be seen as intruding into the area where specific employers should develop more rigorous conditions of service themselves.

One of the most important areas in which changes were made with every wage investigation was in the definition of bulk and dirty cargo. With each determination these definitions were widened slightly and the allowances raised to make this unpopular and unhealthy work more attractive to the workers. Although these changes appear highly technical and routine, they were important

to the employers in attempting to demonstrate some vitality in the legalistic procedures of wage investigation. The bureaucratic and technical language in which the special allowances were set out hid the significance of the issues involved. In United Kingdom ports, for example, piece rates were paid for each type of cargo and the complex adjustment of the rates and definition of cargo formed a fruitful basis for consolidating local collective bargaining with employers and strengthening the trade unions. One of the problems faced by the employers which prompted the formation of the DSLSC was the workers' resistance to taking up dirty or bulk cargo work. The strict supervision of workers under the DSLSC meant that the employers freedom to deploy workers as they wanted was tremendously increased, the employers' freedom matched by the unfreedom of labour. Under the DSLSC the workers had no choice or freedom to refuse filthy and unhealthy work, and the definitions of bulk and dirty cargo can be seen as an attempt to reduce some part of the workers' resistance. But by being enforced in a highly legalistic and semi-legislative way the workers also lost the powers they had to adjust the special allowances through their demands by, for instance, refusing to work on a certain type of cargo. The changes in the definitions of 'bulk' and 'dirty' cargo indicate how arbitrary, and thus how subject to dispute, the distinctions are between different types of cargo (see Appendix E ). The first definition (WD 183) tried to distinguish between bulk cargo in pieces or bundles, and dirty cargo in containers.<sup>113</sup> Exceptionally heavy cargo such as timber, steel, and pieces of machinery were specifically excluded

from the definition of bulk cargo. In subsequent determinations the cargoes for which there were extra payment were continually added to the definition of bulk and dirty cargo. In 1964 a division was made in the payment for bulk and dirty cargo; dirty cargo being paid for at about a third more than bulk cargo, and significantly maize was transferred to the definition of dirty cargo, increasing the inducement to do this work. Other changes were made: gypsum, potash, and superphosphate was added to the definition of bulk cargo, and triple superphosphate, whalebone meal, and lucerne meal in hessian bags to that of dirty cargo. Again, in 1969; oxide, chalk, clay, pitch, and asbestos in hessian or paper bags or in open compressed bundles were included in the definition of dirty cargo.<sup>114</sup> At one level the whole question of minute changes in definitions is either trifling or otherwise technical - simply reflecting the changed composition of commodity trade and the increasing importance of chemicals in particular. But it is important to understand that many of the commodities introduced into the higher paid categories had been handled for many years previous to their being included in the definitions, and that the fundamental issue being addressed was one of wages. The expansion of commodities for which extra payment could be made (in the case of dirty cargo constituting about half of the daily allowance) was one method of increasing wages and output in the most unpopular types of work. Premium payments were also made for work in freezing and cool chambers. The complicated set of definitions was the furthest the employers and the Wage Board would go in making concessions to a totally different wage system, that of piece work, in which the rate

of wages would be set for each commodity handled. Having the experience of employers in the United Kingdom with dock workers in mind (many of the stevedoring companies being linked to British shipping or transport companies), the employers in South Africa were understandably reluctant to allow a system of piece work to develop in which there would be constant renegotiation of rates, disputes over new commodities handled, and the growth of national trade unionism to co-ordinate the workers' struggle. The additions to the definition of bulk and dirty cargo can be seen as a hidden form of collective bargaining in which the employers manoeuvred to forestall disputes. The employers could present the wage determinations which widened the definition of bulk and dirty cargo as concessions to the workers.

### Wage rates and earnings

In recommending wages in the stevedoring trade the Wage Board made no calculation of the ability of stevedoring companies to absorb the increased wages or on the needs of the workers. The data on operating capital, wages, and profit, was simply presented without comment, as were the final wage rates.<sup>115</sup> With a few exceptions, some comments on the wages of particular types of work, the wage rates were simply recommended and the policy of the Wage Board and the proportional wage increases have to be worked out from the results.<sup>116</sup> In the 1968 Wage Board Report it was simply stated that a 15 per cent increase would be made in the wages of all workers. From an examination of the wage determinations, particularly WD 308 of 3 April 1969, it will be argued that the actual policy of the Wage Board was considerably more complex than this simple statement

and that each component of the wage has to be considered as well as the final earnings.

TABLE 6.9      INCREASES IN PRESCRIBED WAGES, PERCENTAGES,  
DURBAN

	Basic wage/ hour %	Overtime %	Sunday Time %	Composite wage %
24 July 1964	50.0	11.1	17.3	33.1
3 April 1969	15.5	16.0	20.3	14.9

Source: Wage determinations 251 and 308. The composite wage is constructed by making up a wage based on four days + Sunday + twelve hours overtime, giving 57 hours worked weekly. For the figures on wages/hour see Appendix .

The percentage increases in each component of the wage give some insight into the changing structure of earnings for stevedoring workers in Durban. Only the increases recommended by the Wage Board are considered, and so there appears to be a substantial increase in the basic wage in 1964. This increase was, in fact, phased in by the DSLSC providing a daily allowance in 1963 (which increased the basic wage by 15.0 per cent) and WD 251 which raised the daily allowance by a further 30.4 per cent. What is striking is the unequal increase in the basic wage and the overtime and Sunday time rates. While the basic wage had been increased by 50.0 per cent since 1959, the increase in overtime was 11.1 per cent and Sunday time 17.3 per cent. Although concessions were being made in terms of increased daily allowances, the workers' earnings were being squeezed by smaller increases during premium wage time. In the important wage determination of 1969, some

compensation was made in the decline of premium wage rates. These small increases did not, however, compensate for the relative decline in premium wage rates over the whole period 1959-1969 during which basic wages were increased by 73.3 per cent, overtime by 28.9 per cent, and Sunday time by 41.1 per cent.

Most importantly, the uneven increase in components of earnings has to be evaluated against a calculation of final earnings.<sup>117</sup> In 1964 the composite wage was increased by 33.1 per cent, and in 1969 by 14.9 per cent; over the whole period 1959-69 the composite wage had been increased by 52.9 per cent while the cost of living had risen by 27.8 per cent.<sup>118</sup> The percentage wage increases cannot be assessed independently from the demands and needs of the workers. They were made from comparatively low base figures, and by the end of the ten year period had only come up to two-thirds the wage level demanded by SACTU in 1958.<sup>119</sup> The only available statistics on calculated needs of African workers living in Durban are the poverty datum lines worked out by the University of Natal. The poverty datum line concept is a product of bourgeois social science in that it attempts to construct a scientific basis for estimating the minimum needs of working class families without reference to the workers' aspirations or demands. In South Africa the poverty line concept is racially determined (there is often an astonishing variation in the amount of food 'allowed' to different groups of workers) and serves ideologically to buttress the cheap labour system.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, the poverty lines are the only cost of living studies which are based on need, and do give some idea of the ruthless minimum needed by African families to survive in urban townships, and can give some reference point to dock wage rates. By 1969 the basic

wage of stevedoring labourers constituted 85 per cent of the poverty datum line calculated for African families in Durban.<sup>121</sup> Since workers would by no means be guaranteed this level of earnings under the daily allowance system, it is necessary to examine the actual earnings of workers during the 1960s to get some idea of the absolute level of earnings and the way in which wage determinations have affected the earnings of workers.

Earnings of workers employed by the DSLSC have been calculated from record cards which were made available by the company. A survey of earnings enables conclusions to be drawn about the earnings of workers (as opposed to such flexible categories as the 'basic wage'), their increase over the years, and the effects of wage determinations finally on the 'take home' wage of the workers.

TABLE 6.10      AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS, DSLSC (R)

	Labourers	Gangway/winchemen	Indunas
1961/62	9.91	10.69	15.16
1962/63	9.68	11.15	15.33
1963/64	10.51	12.26	15.84
1964/65	12.92	15.00	18.31
1965/66	12.76	14.22	16.87
1966/67	12.74	15.11	16.20
1967/68	13.06	15.32	17.81
1968/69	-	15.43	18.61

Source: Survey of record cards. In 1968 the cards become too scattered for adequate sampling in the case of stevedoring labourers.

What is striking from an analysis of the earnings of the labourers is that advances in wages were by no means automatic and between 1961/62 to 1962/63 and between 1964/65 to 1966/67 wages actually declined. The increases in earnings then reflected the increase in wage rates in particular years (1963 and 1964), and with the exception of the increase in earnings in 1967/68 of 2.5 per cent, the workers were basically dependent on increased wage rates rather than more work at the premium wage rates of overtime and Sunday time.<sup>122</sup> Despite the tremendous increase in cargo handled during the 1960s there was not an exactly equal increase in earnings because of the rising demand for extended hours of work; in part the increased tempo of work was met with increased employment.<sup>123</sup> Despite changes in labour supply to meet increased demand, the premium wage rates of overtime and Sunday time increased from 41.5 per cent in 1961/62 to 54.9 per cent in 1967/68. By the late 1960s more than half the earnings of the workers were being made up of the premium wage rates even though the wage determinations had significantly reduced these rates in terms of the basic wage.

An examination of the earnings of the workers helps to provide some insight into the effect of the increases in wage rates which were introduced and the way in which they 'worked through' the wage components to affect earnings. The daily allowance of 15 cents added to the basic wage by the DSLSC in 1963 raised the basic wage by 15 per cent, but increased earnings between 1962/63 to 1963/64 by only 8.6 per cent. Similarly, the increase of the

basic wage by 30.4 per cent in 1964 increased earnings by 22.9 per cent. The increase in earnings are also lower than that in the hypothetical composite wage constructed to reflect all the changes in the wage pattern. For example, the composite wage increased by 25.8 per cent between 1963 and 1964, while earnings between 1963/64 to 1964/65 rose by 22.9 per cent. The earnings figures also correct the view that the Wage Board introduced considerable improvements in the earnings of the workers. Considered over the whole ten year period, 1959-69, the minimum basic wage was increased by 73.3 per cent but earnings up to 1968 had increased by only 31.8 per cent, a relatively minor increase over the rise in the cost of living of 5.9 per cent.<sup>124</sup> Considered from the perspective of the needs of the workers, despite the extraordinarily long hours involving extensive overtime, the earnings of stevedoring labourers did not approach the minimum effective level of the poverty line which is calculated to take into account the necessary additional income needed to maintain a minimum level of expenditure on essentials.<sup>125</sup> In 1968 the minimum effective level calculated by adjusting the 1958 poverty study upwards was R19.04 a week. While capital logically assesses wages in terms of productivity rather than need, throughout the wage investigations of the 1960s there was no discussion about the amount of output per worker. While the subject was apparently avoided on technical grounds (that the type of cargo handled and the machinery employed gave a false impression in comparing the efficiency of the workers in one port against that of another) this was also a means of controlling disclosure of information which could be used by the workers to demand higher wages for more work. The question of output

per worker; in a sector where the exploitation of labour was not obscured by high level technology and the value added to the commodities moved rested obviously on the labour power of the workers; came too close to the issue of the extraction of surplus labour. In 1966, a year in which a record cargo of 8.557m tonnes was landed (a figure which has not been equalled since), each stevedoring worker handled 6,573 tonnes, a considerable increase on the 4,114 tonnes handled in 1962. While admittedly the productivity of the stevedoring workers varied in relation to the amount of cargo directed to Durban, and more generally by the pattern of slump and boom in the economy, the obvious fact that the workers were handling ever increasing mass of cargo per worker was avoided in deliberations over wage levels.<sup>126</sup>

The earnings data also give some idea of the actual differentiation among the stevedoring workers and the operation of wage differentials. Two tendencies are most evident: a decline in the differences in wages between labourers and indunas, and an increase in the difference of earnings between labourers and gangwaymen. The wage differential between manual workers and the indunas declined gradually over the period 1961/62 to 1967/68. In the former year the labourers earned 65.4 per cent of the indunas' final wage, and in the latter 73.3 per cent. The wages of the gangwaymen rose more sharply, from 70.5 to 86.0 per cent of the indunas' final wage in the same period. The narrowing of differentials between all manual workers and black

supervisors which was forced on the employers because of resistance to this wage gap in the earlier period and the need to attract proficient labourers, tended to disguise the rising gap between labourers and gangwaymen. While labourers earned 92.7 per cent of the gangwaymen's final wages in 1961/62, by 1967/68 this had been reduced to 85.3 per cent. This area of rising differentials reflected the employers' policy of increasing the rewards to the operatives in stevedoring in order to create a sense of professionalism and detachment from the stevedoring labourers.

#### National oppression and contract labour

The effectiveness of the DSLSC solved many of the pressing problems of the employers in labour supply, deployment of workers, and control over wages. The rigorous enforcement of detailed control over the workers was only possible because of the disorganization and repression of the working class and national movements carried through by the state and powerful employer organizations. Contrary to the prediction of the liberal bourgeoisie that racism would be dissolved by a vast expansion of capital such as the boom of the 1960s, national oppression was decisively intensified. Having regained the confidence of foreign capital in the early 1960s, the National Party pressed ahead with its programme of denying all political rights to the growing black working class. The policy took two main forms: the development of the Bantustans which reorganized

the African masses into ethnic blocs under the direction of sections of the black petty bourgeoisie, and by transforming the flow of migrant labour to and from the industrial centres into a centralized movement of contract workers.

The form of national oppression introduced in the 1960s, the commoditization of black labour stripped of political demands, placed the primary emphasis of state policy on a cheap labour policy to the benefit of employers. African workers were to be reduced solely to the role of sellers of labour power in the industrial centres; the question of the African petty bourgeoisie was secondary. They were either to be satisfied with a minimal participation in political life in the Urban Bantu Councils, or reorientated towards new political tasks in the Bantustans. The alienation of all African workers from the product of the working class was carried to extreme as the ruling class developed an ideology of African nations being the 'homelands' of the African workers. All political content was to be removed from the increased levels of proletarianization experienced by the African workers in the post-war period. The African workers were directed towards the countryside for political expression, legal authorization to be in urban areas, and as a final resting place. Initially the African petty bourgeoisie adopted a critical view of the Bantustan programme, but with increasing political office and soft loans, the Bantustans became more attractive. The rulers of the Bantustans soon took up the demands for more land, increased salaries, and greater powers. But every development of the Bantustans, the consolidation of power of sections of the African petty bourgeoisie, the extension of

'citizenship' in the remote Bantustans, acted against the interests of the African workers.

The contradiction between the development of the Bantustans and the African working class was made most acute in regulations promulgated towards the end of the 1960s which had a vital bearing on recruitment and the consolidation of tribal authorities in the Bantustans.<sup>127</sup> These regulations had the primary feature of placing the control over movement of African workers in the hands of the chiefs and Bantustan authorities ('efflux' rather than 'influx' control), damming the supply of labour in the Bantustans to be on call to employers, and eliminating the possibility of migrant workers gradually consolidating their legal position in the cities.<sup>128</sup> Through the new regulations migratory workers who were permitted to be in urban areas to work for an employer for an indefinite period were transformed into contract workers who were only permitted to be in the urban areas for wage labour for a specific employer for a contract not longer than 360 shifts. On termination of contract, the African worker was required to return to the Bantustan to wait for a further contract. The interest of the chiefs and Bantustan bureaucracy in the administration and control over the movement and contracts of service was stimulated by the employers being required to pay a R1 recruitment fee for each worker recruited to the tribal authorities. The workers were to be classified into seventeen different categories of labour, the last being 'unemployable'. The regulations which provided for centralized

control over the movement of workers (the Director of Bantu Labour may zone the areas for which African workers may be made available for service), sharply increased the dependence of African workers on the Bantustan bureaucracies for employment. Stevedoring workers who were recruited from the Bantustan areas increasingly came under the detailed control of the numerous labour bureaux and the discipline of the employers.

The armoury of regulations, labour bureaux, and service contracts, were the state's response to the declining rate of growth in the late 1960s and the growing presence of African workers in the towns who had either lost or had only relatively weak links with the countryside. In an attempt to avoid the demands of African workers for full employment, housing, higher wages, and political rights, the regulations intensified the national oppression experienced by the African people as a whole. This extension of the state into virtually all aspects of recruitment and employment of African workers was an acknowledgement of the growing strength of the black working class.

The stevedoring workers, recruited from the distant reserves in Kwa Zulu and Pondoland, were particularly vulnerable to increasingly coercive labour controls. Throughout the 1960s the stevedoring workers were forced to reproduce themselves as a migrant labour force. While the earnings of the stevedoring labourers had increased slightly over this period, any subsidy to wages from agricultural production in the reserves by their wives had declined drastically.

TABLE 6.11 PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF MAIZE AND SORGHUM  
FROM PRODUCTION IN THE RESERVES

	Population (000)	Production (000 t)	Consumption (kg/year) (per capita)
1960	4,112	294	72
1970	7,003	263	38

Sources: Population statistics from Knight (1977): 41  
 1960 production figures an average from 1960-66  
 1970 " " " " 1967-73

With a potential decline in grain consumption from homestead production of 89.5 per cent, an increase in real earnings of stevedoring labourers of 5.9 per cent would not compensate for the decline in grain available to the homestead. The wage recommendations issued by the Wage Board can be understood as providing a limit to the decline in real wages rather than any material advance for the workers over the whole period. Despite this evident ineffectiveness of the Wage Board in raising real wages, the process of wage investigation had set in train expectations among the workers that advances would be made.

One of the contradictory developments in stevedoring during the 1960s was the advance of the indunas into the role of effective supervisors of the workers. From a perspective of national oppression as a racial ordering of society under direct white rule, it could be expected that intensified national oppression would demand that supervision be directly in the hands of the white foremen. Increasingly the task of supervision was passing into the hands of the senior indunas as the real sergeant-major of capital on the ships. This important shift marked the growing maturity of

capitalist control over the labour process, social controls rather than a legal/racial command system increasingly characterizing the rule of capital even within labour-intensive industry. With the easing of racial conflict and hostility bred from the lack of understanding by the white foremen of African languages, production was increased and profits guaranteed. Without understanding this development the struggles of the workers and their demands are inexplicable. The extended hours of work and intensified labour in the docks would have been impossible without this modified form of supervision.

Despite the increased controls over African labour in society as a whole, and the strengthening of the position of the employers through the DSLSC, the stevedoring workers paradoxically were in a strong position by the late 1960s. While the guerilla struggles of workers under the smaller employers before the consolidation of the DSLSC were possible to sustain, the centralization of accommodation and deployment under the DSLSC, also had the effect of concentrating the workers. The workers were at the centre of the dock labour process, rapidly becoming more conversant with the machinery being introduced, and aware of their employers dependence on their labour-power.

FOOTNOTES

1. Marx (1974), III: 232-240, deals with these counteracting influences on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.
2. The phrase comes from management notes, I, (1966): 1.
3. At 1958 prices. See Duncan Innes and Luke Malaba, 1978, The South African State and its Policy vis-a-vis Supplier Economies. Unpublished Paper, Part I.
4. Hobsbawn (1964):207 argues that the stevedore's ability to stow export cargo provides them with considerable bargaining strength.
5. A large proportion of workers listed in the Government Gazettes as not having claimed Workmens Compensation for injuries are employed by the labour supply company. The workers' view of their exploitation was clearly expressed in the following terms: 'The bosses treat us like an orange: they suck out the juice of our labour and then throw us away.'
6. Management notes, I, (1966):1.
7. Daily News, 16 September 1960. Time clocks were installed in the sheds to enable tighter control of African workers. All workers were compelled to work on Christmas Day 1960. The latter issue caused public criticism of the SARH. Daily News, 29 April 1960, 19, 20, 21, December 1960.
8. Management notes, II, (1966):1.
9. Management notes, I, (1966):2. The ability of workers to resist the prerogative of employers in changing the category of their employment and job definition is the essence of defensive trade unionism. Workers' job security and pace of work is very closely tied up with a narrow definition of 'the job' in contracts of employment. A multiplicity of jobs is also some guarantee of more employment. It is precisely these restraints on management that the labour supply company was formed to dissolve.
10. ibid., 2.
11. Somewhat surprisingly, the deputy manager of the labour supply company blamed much of the unrest of the 1950s on indunas who resented their loss of power to hire or marshall workers each day. Given the low composition of capital in the harbour it would not have been improbable for the indunas to have aspired to a petty bourgeois status as labour contractors to the stevedoring companies.
12. Books on industrial psychology take pride of place in the deputy manager's office, supplemented with anthropological literature on 'The Zulu'.

13. Management notes, February 1966: 8.
14. Management notes, I, (1966): 7. In this passage management makes a complete identification between 'primary work groups' and the stevedoring gangs, a unity of language and not substance with the voluntary associations of workers in production.
15. This ideological approach is stressed by the Bantu Productivity Association which produces material developing what it considers are the customs and habits of African workers, deriving their background from cultural anthropology and tribalism. African workers appear as exceptional human beings with rather odd behaviour which has to be taken account of in the pursuit of higher profits. This ideology has been mainly employed by capital most heavily dependent on the exploitation of migratory workers.
16. Management notes, I, (1966):7. My emphasis.
- 17a. Management notes, II,: 8.
- 17b. Marx, I (1976):443. This theme is developed throughout the Chapter 13 on co-operation; the contradiction for capital is that the heightening of collective productive power also strengthens the solidarity among workers.
18. Management notes, II, (1966):10.
19. Management notes, II, (1966): 1.
20. ibid.,8.
21. Management notes, II: 4.
22. Government Gazette, 3 April 1969: 3. According to this determination the minimum wage of a foreman was about 2,3 times the wage of a senior induna. The senior induna replaced the 'hatch foreman' job which was not specified in the wage determinations but included in the wage analysis made by the Wage Board during each investigation up to 1972.
23. ibid., 2. The official terminology for fork-lift trucks is 'mobile power-driven hoist.'
24. Wage Board Report, 1964: Appendix II.
25. Wage Board Report, 1958: 13.
26. Natal Mercury, 4 November, 1972.
27. Made up of 8 hours 40 minutes ordinary time, 3 hours 40 minutes compulsory overtime for five days Monday to Friday, 4 hours 40 minutes ordinary hours on Saturday, and a further 12 hours and 20 minutes ordinary and overtime on Sunday. According to Wage Determination 183 the normal hours of work are 47hr 20 and maximum overtime 34 hours 20 minute a week. Government Gazette, 6 Feb. 1959:9-11.

28. Wage Determination 183, 5 (5). Emergency work is not rigorously defined, being merely any work which the port authority decided 'for good and sufficient reason' needs to be performed beyond the limits of overtime.
29. New Age, (9 April 1959).
30. The primary critique of these measures to perpetuate the migrant labour system made by the liberal bourgeoisie is that migrant labour was enormously wasteful in terms of labour time and the growth of skills of the workers (Houghton, 1964 ). The response of the state was to streamline control over the movement of workers to stop the 'aimless' movement of workers to town, and to allow them into the centres of employment only for a specific contract. The ready availability of black workers from the reserves for employers could be said to increase the total amount of labour time available to capital as a whole.
31. Dreyer found it amusing that workers who had been rejected often tried again by joining the end of the queue to be re-examined.
32. This point will be developed at greater length in the next chapter, but at this juncture it is important to counteract Company arguments that it is a beneficial employment agency of eager workseekers attracted to its exceptional wages and conditions.
33. See Bantu Labour Act of 1964 which makes special provision for the exemption of the police and state industries from the barriers of influx control in recruiting African workers from the reserves. This exemption from the restrictions of state legislation enables the state sector to maintain a low-wage policy and constant labour supplies. Ironically, it also re-establishes the political nature of the wage contract for these workers, a relation of dependence and domination. During the strikes of 1973 the Minister of Labour stated proudly that no state employe had come out on strike.
34. Gerald D. Sack has made two studies of migrant workers in harbour employment in Durban. The first, his thesis, Izimpohlo: the bachelors; a study of black migrant labourers in Durban, (hereafter Sack I) concentrates on railway workers but also comparative material on the stevedores. The second, a paper, 'The 1972-73 strikes in Natal', (hereafter Sack II), is more interpretive of the social organization of the stevedores and their political consciousness. In his paper (II:10) Sack simply writes that the 'Transkeians' presence in Durban is largely on 'official suffereance'. Because they had only the alternative of becoming mine workers, these workers took virtually no part in the strikes or in any other directly anti-institutional behaviour'.

35. Not all workers are necessarily recruited de novo or recruited at all; the stevedoring labour force being made up of those workers not victimised during the 1959 strike and those who applied for work in the post-strike situation. There is some discrepancy between the total number of workers employed, for example, in 1968 when figures are available and the January 1970 figure. I have taken the figures given by management to represent the 'home' districts of workers actively employed at the time, i.e. not taking account of those on leave. Sack (II: Table I) presents figures for 16 May 1972 and a comparison will be made below.
36. Vilikazi (1958) and Mbatha (1960) in studying the people of a Valley of a Thousand Hills in the Ndwedwe magisterial district which borders the rail service from Durban to Pietermaritzburg through Botha's Hill pay particular attention to the 'weekend migration' phenomenon. During the 1970s the tendency has been for workers to commute daily from this area making use of the rail service into Pinetown and Durban.
37. At the Wage Board sitting in Durban on 17 July 1972 the employers argued that the workers did not need a large wage increase as they had no transport expenses. A worker stood up and displayed a season rail ticket in support for demands of R18 basic wage per week. His claim that all workers had to meet increased transport costs was fiercely disputed by the employers. This is an instance in which the urbanization of a section of the workers created the basis for advancing the workers' demands and repudiating the argument of the employers that migratory workers did not have to meet the same expenses as urban workers.
38. Natal Regional Survey (1969): 84, and Wage Board Report (1964): para 36.
39. Wage Board Report (1964): para 48. The 1972 Wage Board Report is silent on the issue despite the matter being contested at the Durban sitting (para 74).
40. National Regional Survey (1969): 82.
41. The record card entries become rather scattered in the case of labourers during the period 1968/69 and could possibly represent a false tendency if used as a basis for calculations.
42. This point will be returned to in the section on wages and earnings. What is not adequately developed in this section is the relationship of length of contract to rising unemployment; the more workers that the employers could have at their disposal the longer the possible length of contract if earnings were kept low by a relative oversupply of labour in the docks. During times of rising unemployment there is a marked decline in the turnover of workers.

43. Bantu Labour Regulations (Bantu Areas), Government Gazette, 29 March 1968 lays down the most stringent regulations to be enforced by the state and employers. Contracts of employment may not exceed one year and employers must undertake to repatriate workers to their homes at the termination of the contract of service.
44. This is not altogether a voluntary process; many workers are fired by employers at the end of the year either to avoid paying holiday pay or because employers do not want to pay the higher wage rates due to workers who qualify through length of service.
45. On the basis of a 'normal' distribution of termination of contracts equally each month this figure would be 16.7 per cent.
46. A number of studies show a rising tendency for the division of labour in homestead production to change. Whereas the men were responsible for ploughing in the past, women are increasingly taking over this work.
47. Davies (1978).
48. Steenkamp (1962):92. As one of the leading state economists of the time Steenkamp was generally aware of rising African unemployment; what he did not discuss was the growing state measures to channel these workers into the low-wage sectors, and the tendency of capital itself to increase the rate of exploitation and shed labour through competition with other capitals.
49. Steenkamp (1962):98. Both ideologically and in practice at public sittings and in Wage Board reports, the state bureaucrats express their hostility to the organization of workers and the concept of basing wage levels on the needs of workers.
50. Steenkamp (1962): 92 and 93.
51. At no point does Steenkamp move on to a concrete discussion of the level of African unemployment or mention that statistics were not kept by the state. The arguments against increased wages are primarily those of ideology rather than bourgeois political economy.
52. Steenkamp (1963):217.
53. Until the 1950s the stevedoring employers in Cape Town were an exception to this rule as they negotiated conditions of service on an industrial council with the Cape Town Stevedoring and Dock Workers Union.

54. See earlier discussion of the strike wave in 1942. There is some evidence that tension between the stevedoring employers and state officials still exists. The Assistant Manager of the DSLSC has tried to persuade the Wage Board to make an annual review of wages in the trade but without success.
55. Wage Board Report (1964): para. 42 and 56.
56. A survey of the record cards of the DSLSC provides the information which is presented below on the changes in earnings on an annual basis. Unfortunately these figures cannot be directly compared with those in the Wage Board reports as the DSLSC figures are calculated on an annual basis and the Wage Board figures present earnings on the week ending 30 November 1963.
57. A strike of railway workers followed the wage increase won by stevedoring workers in 1954.
58. Natal Regional Survey (1969):48.
59. WBR (1964): para 61. The precise point at which the 'retaining fee' paid to DSLSC workers was introduced is not clear (from figures apparently after July 1963), but this method of raising wages would be the cheapest for employers. An increase in the weekly wage rate could cause workers to demand a corresponding increase in overtime payment.
60. For some discussion of the functions and practice of the Central Native Labour Board, established in terms of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953, see Muriel Horrell, 1961, South African Trade Unionism, SAIRR, pp.93-111. Negotiations between the workers and the CNLB took place during the 1950s on wage increases; the action by the Board was an attempt to defuse a volatile situation for the employers by threatening the workers by stating strikes were illegal and offering the carrot of negotiations. See above.
61. During a time of relative oversupply of labour, company officials could allocate work to those workers they approved of, and deny it to those they wanted to discipline.
62. The most favourable overtime rates negotiated by strong unions reach time and a half (150 per cent of hourly rates) and double pay for public holidays.
63. Factories Act, No.22 of 1941, S2 (1).
64. WBR, 1964; para 68.
65. Wage Act No. of 1957, S8.
66. Steenkamp, 1963: 217.

67. WBR 1958: 13. This apparently was one area where higher productivity did not justify higher wages as less 'pure' expenditure of labour power was needed!
68. WBR, 1964: para 55.
69. Marx, I (1976): 276.
70. Steenkamp (1960).
71. The Wage Board resisted being drawn into defining the jobs and wages of office and administrative staff and limited its scope to manual operations, 'those engaged in the actual stevedoring operations'. The exclusion of white collar jobs from the wage determinations weakens their coverage considerably. WBR 1964: para 5.
72. The foremen, indunas, leaders, learner stevedores, liaison indunas and senior indunas.
73. It is, of course, in the interests of capital to displace the task of controlling the workers on to the shoulders of the indunas and it could be argued that sharp struggles between these two sections of the workers were in the interest of the employers. Against this trend it is argued here that the very nature of working class struggle (the independence from employers, demands for a transformation of property relations) makes resistance to the sergeant majors of capital a key component of class consciousness.
74. Purcell, Donald E., June 1969. 'The Impact of the South African Wage Board on Skilled/Unskilled Wage Differentials' East African Economic Review: 73-81.
75. In 1964 the minimum wage for a foreman was set by WD 251 at R30 per week. The average weekly earnings for foremen in Durban, which was the lowest wage area for white workers as well as black, was R35.19 in November 1963! WBR 1964; Annexure III.
76. Purcell (1969) argues the Wage Board follows a conscious policy of trying to narrow the wage gap, the problem, he feels, is that the increasing demand for white labour in the 1960s forced their wages upwards.
77. What is argued is that even under a regime of national oppression of African workers a completely separate 'white' and 'black' labour market does not evolve. The concern of the liberal bourgeoisie about the black/white wage gap indicates its determination to reduce wages as a whole to a minimum level.
78. The introduction of a daily allowance in 1963 was on the basis of 15 cents a day for labourers and 20 cents for winchmen.

79. WBR 1964; para 63.
80. WD 308, 3 April 1969, p.4.
81. Possibly more important was the growing differential between the winchmen and the labourers, 14% greater in 1964 and 25% greater in 1972.
82. The subsequent social action of the workers, it is argued, can not be explained unless it is understood that the Wage Board could make certain significant changes in conditions. If the whole exercise were demonstrably proved to be a sham, or simply and obviously consolidating the power of the employers, strike action by the workers would be inevitable and swift.
83. Both through allowing the system of daily allowances and reducing the overtime and Sunday wage rates as a proportion of basic wages.
84. This viewpoint is that of the Chamber of Mines in particular, but also that of the Minister of Labour in introducing the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act in 1953.
85. Workers Unity, May 1959.
86. WBR, 1958:2. Any worker appearing at the Wage Board would, of course, face the possibility of victimization despite the safeguards of the Wage Act. Another not insignificant point is that translators are not available at the Wage Board sittings and that discussion is in the bureaucratic language of industrial relations.
87. The participation of the majority of the stevedoring workers, the African workers, in registered trade unions was prohibited through administrative edict in 1945 and legislatively in the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953. The industrial council of the stevedoring trade in Cape Town apparently lingered on as an unregistered body, the union having to decide whether to exclude African workers and remain registered or participate in the industrial council only as an informal body.
88. Workers were not likely to accept this explanation at all, but the action by employers in allowing some representation (in many other investigations during this period no representation at all was permitted) would be likely to have some influence on the thinking of those workers in the graded occupations, for whom defined occupations and wage rates provided them with some recognition, and those workers dominated by the notion of an enlightened management recognizing their needs.

89. It is no easy matter for workers to find out about Wage Board investigations. The date and place of hearings is published in the Government Gazette but no longer as they used to be in the press. The information is socially, not legally restricted; the employers being forewarned both by the Wage Board and by their employer associations. The chance that unorganized workers would find out about wage investigations by casually glancing through the Government Gazette is nil.
90. The trade union appeared to be a part time occupation for the main official of the union in Durban who was increasingly disillusioned with the possibility of the union surviving by the early 1970s as the Security Branch stepped up pressure against the organization of transport workers in particular. The relation between Indian and African workers in the docks has been complicated by a form of 'civilized labour' policy adopted by the SARRH which gave preference to Indian workers. Despite this, and other points likely to create antagonism the relationship between Indian and African workers through the union was positive..
91. The twists and turns of TUCSA's policy towards the mass of workers in South Africa cannot be developed here (see Muriel Horrell, 1968, South Africa's Workers, SAIRR) but were as much related to its lack of recognition abroad, especially at the ILO, as with a serious attempt to relate to the pressing tasks of organizing the overwhelming majority of workers in South Africa. The 'forward' attitude of TUCSA in Durban was also very much the product of the activity of one official not always acting with the support of head office.
92. WBR 1968: Appendix / . This was the median wage of labourers not employed by the DSLSC in Durban, i.e. weekly employees of Grindrod and Gersigny. Their wages were, however, likely to be identical to those of the DSLSC workers. Once again during the 1968 wage investigation, this company was exempted from having to provide full disclosure of the wages of its workers.
93. While it is superficially true that the 'Indian' RTWU did not represent the mass of workers in terms of having a mandate from these workers, neither did the 'works committee'. Here, as in other points of conflict, the Africanism of the collaborators is used to obscure the fundamental common interests of all workers.
94. The DSLSC says that all the senior indunas have worked their way up from labourers and are not inserted on the basis of other criteria (e.g. education) into positions of authority.
95. Information from Dreyer. In 1970 the DSLSC employed two whites and five blacks in the work of liaison with the ships. The liaison indunas earned the same wage as the indunas working on the ships.
96. The grain trimmers were eventually paid a wage considerably higher than a fork-lift driver.

97. FAO, World grain trade statistics, 1973/74: Table 35.
98. Natal Regional Survey, 15: Table VI.
99. The employers also proposed to cut down the work break for the night shift from one hour to half an hour so that workers would be able to finish half an hour earlier while working the same hours. This request was basically to ratify an already existing practice.
100. This was particularly the case with factories using assembly lines and a continuous flow of production. While no studies of the restructuring of capital in the late 1960s are available, my impression is that companies like South African Breweries (which employed the leading social psychologists of the time), Dunlops, Alcan Aluminium, and Lever Brothers, were in the forefront of these developments.
101. Because the stevedoring companies acted as a cartel there was not the same pressure as in industry to increase division of labour in order to compete.
102. WBR, 1964: para 29. In 1965 the Anglo-American Investment Corporation had a return on capital employed of 13.3 per cent. In six of the companies the returns exceeded 75 per cent on capital.
103. WBR, 1968:9.
104. WBR, 1964:4 and 5.
105. Marx, II: 54. With individual use, the value of transport disappears during its consumption.
106. Marx, III: 48.
107. Marx, III: 47.
108. WBR, 1964: Table II.
109. Marx, I, (1976): 326.
110. The rate of profit in terms of total costs in 1962/63 was 21.6 per cent while the rate of surplus value was 30.0 per cent.
111. WBR, 1939; para 15 and WBR, 1964: Table II.
112. Statistics both from an earlier and a later period reinforce this trend. In 1938 the wages of labourers and administrative staff constituted 52.5 per cent of turnover, and looking beyond the 1960s, were 79.2 per cent of turnover in 1975. (WBR 1939: para 15 and Statistical News Release, 27 April 1978: Census of Transport and Allied Services, 1975). These statistics are not, however, directly comparable to those above.

113. The distinction between cargoes loose or in containers led immediately to anomalies: coal being included in the definition of dirty cargo in containers!
114. Many of the chemicals included in the definition of bulk and dirty cargo have become known as dangerous to the health of workers. Asbestos particularly is still acutely dangerous to the health of dock workers; in the early 1970s stevedoring workers were often seen covered white with asbestos dust.
115. Each Wage Board Report concludes with the blanket assertion that the employers would be able to conduct their business successfully if the recommendations were implemented.
116. This has been the approach of the most detailed study of the Wage Board which examined the rise in wages laid down by wage determinations over the existing wages paid in particular industries. Donald E. Purcell, June 1968, 'Bantu Real Wages and Employment Opportunities in South Africa', SAJE
117. As the Wage Board exempted the DSLSC during each investigation from providing comprehensive data on earnings, a 'composite wage' has been calculated which attempts to include all the major variations in the components of the wage: basic wage, overtime, and Sunday time.
118. Pillay, P.N. 1973. 'A poverty datum line study among Africans in Durban'. Department of Economics: University of Natal, Durban. The 1958 poverty datum line has been adjusted upwards by the rise in the price of food, to give a figure of R25.46 a month, or R12.20 a week.
119. Calculated from the index of the price of food, base year 1970. Bulletin of Statistics.
120. By 1969 the basic wage rate was 22 cents/hour, while the demand of SACTU in 1958 had been 31 cents/hour stevedoring labourers. If this wage demand was adjusted upwards to include the rise in the cost of living (giving a figure of 40 cents/hour), the wage increases introduced through the Wage Board would be just over half of the workers demand.
121. Following the mass strikes of 1973, for instance, the poverty line was used as a goal for employers to aim ultimately to achieve. When reached, the poverty line wages for African workers have not challenged the tremendous wage differentials between white and black workers.
122. Unfortunately it is not possible to assess the effect of WD 308 introduced on 3 April 1969 on earnings as the record cards were discontinued in that year as most of the workers were dismissed for striking against the wages laid down.

123. See above for figures on DSLSC employment on July of each year.
124. Calculated from the index of food prices.
125. Pillay (1973) deals with this issue; most researchers agree that the poverty datum line should be increased by 50 per cent to allow for expenditure on essentials to rise to the minimum levels established for food, light and fuel, and clothing.
126. The question of the productivity of stevedoring workers, the 'efficiency' of the port as a whole, and the problem of harbour congestion is not dealt with at length here, but forms part of the substantive debate on the crisis in the docks in the early 1970s.
127. Bantu Labour Regulations (Bantu Areas) 29 March 1968.
128. Previously African workers classified as S10(d) in terms of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Act had the opportunity of qualifying for urban residence if they had worked for a single employer for ten years.

## CHAPTER 7

### Forced labour, strikes, and resistance to the apartheid state

The advantages to the Port of Durban were very numerous and have stood the test of time ... since 23 February 1959 (we) can proudly state that not one day of work has been lost as a result of disputes or strikes.

Management notes (1966): 10, on the formation and operation of the DSLSC

Apartheid is therefore a system of forced labour, and forced labour is cheap labour. African workers in South Africa are quite defenceless and have no means of ensuring that they receive adequate and fair wages.

Gervasi (1970): para 79

The vast extension of state regulations into virtually all aspects of the sale and purchase of labour power in South Africa has sharply accentuated the conception of forced labour under the apartheid state. By steadily consolidating the regulations which governed employer/employee contracts, urban residence, and migratory labour, the apartheid state was seen to have constructed a mesh of interlocking bureaucracies which completely negated any resistance on the part of the African workers. Throughout the 1960s the number of workers deported from the towns rose, pass prosecutions increased steadily, and prison labour particularly in agriculture was being extended on a cooperative basis between farmers and the prison service. The housing of African households in the towns was limited to the strictest minimum, and the majority of workers were compelled to live in compounds and hostels under the twenty-four hour a day control of the employers and state officials, both during working hours and at rest.

With the suppression of political and industrial organization of black workers, there was a dearth of resistance to these measures. The nature of exploitation and national oppression came to be seen as both institutional (with a strong emphasis on the overdevelopment of the Bantu Administration Department bureaucracy, police, and the state apparatus generally) and absolutist (with no serious check on the further extension of state power). Studies of the political economy tended to place the state at the fulcrum of capital accumulation; politics taking command of both the direction and pace of economic growth. In its strongest expression, the apartheid state had accelerated economic growth to the level of 'forced industrialization'.<sup>1</sup> The rate of accumulation was not seen as being governed by market forces, or related to the world-wide expansion of capital, but seen as governed by the accelerator of capital investment by the state. South Africa appeared to have an exceptional economy with a unique combination of parastatals and monopoly companies governing the forward movement of accumulation.

A corollary to the massive expansion and concentration of capital was the forced labour system and the defencelessness and helplessness of the black working class prohibited from striking and threatened by an armoury of repressive legislation from taking collective action. These measures secured the ultra-exploitation of African labour and the boom of the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> While these studies did much to dispel the liberal optimism of bourgeois intellectuals about the possibilities for reform, they did not provide an understanding of the fundamental contradictions involved in capital accumulation in South Africa: the inability of manufacturing to generate exports on any scale, and the growth of an increasingly confident and concentrated black working class. In many industries, in mining, in the docks, and in many other sectors of the economy, African workers were the core of the labour force and despite the numerous conventional and legal restrictions were performing skilled work. The apparent decline in strike activity from even the relatively low figures of the late 1950s (which Gervasi draws attention to) were only a partial indication of the consciousness of the working class. A closer study of the strike figures would have indicated a gradual increase both in the number of strikes and strikers in the later part of the 1960s, low though these figures were.

The rapid pace of accumulation in the 1960s had brought into being a black proletariat which had considerably lessened its ties with the land (both because of the declining food production in the reserves and the rising wages in the non-mining sectors) or completely severed these ties by struggling for accommodation in the townships or in the growing squatters' camps. Any rural alternative to wage labour, or even significant subsidy to household income, was rapidly becoming anachronistic, and rural impoverishment propelled the black working class forward in its demands for higher wages, housing, industrial and political rights in the factories and towns. The development of the Bantustans tended to obscure the massive industrial reserve army of labour moving in and out of employment, for the

most part retaining links to the land only because of the severity of influx control and the security which a dwarf plot provided in old age. The Bantustans were designed to increase the physical and ideological distance of the African workers from the industrial and political centres, to encourage a 'return to the land' movement, and to make the land a basis for communal life and political values. Although formed on a tribal-language basis, the Bantustans encouraged a form of petty bourgeois nationalism which decried national oppression and presented collaboration with the apartheid state as a 'statesmanlike' way forward. Every legislative measure which consolidated the Bantustans, however, meant an attack on the African working class which was threatened with the removal of all urban-industrial rights in exchange for citizenship in a remote and oppressive Bantustan.

An analysis of apartheid as a forced labour system locates compulsion in the political, legal, and institutional controls over the sale and purchase of labour power. Broadly then there would be three forms of labour markets: ultra-exploited contract workers as in the mining industry, African workers with some urban-industrial rights, and politically free white workers. The compulsion in the contract between the worker and employer would be determined by the declining product from the land and starvation in the reserves with the additional burden of tax. The freedom of the African worker to contract the sale of his labour power exists only at the formal 'pre-negotiation' stage at which he can decide to starve or accept the wages and conditions offered. At the formal engagement period the substantial terms of contract are non-negotiable being statutorily defined maximum working hours and length of contract. The supposedly negotiable elements such as wages may be defined at minimum wage levels or prescribed by the employer; most contracts are completed to be attested by the worker. Once agreed to, the worker enters the formal sphere of legal compulsion, a 'slave period' in which the penal prohibition on striking or terminating a contract is enforced and during which the worker is held by the employer to observe all conditions

of service.<sup>3</sup> The institutional controls differ for workers housed in compounds or permitted housing in the townships, but this relates more to the question of enforcement of the elements of the contract rather than additional legal controls. Lacking political rights, the African worker cannot transform the legislation which holds him in bondage or create greater institutional equality between employer and employee.

Despite the insight which a radical critique of the 'freedom' of contracts of service under national oppression provides, Marxist theory would argue that all labour under capitalism is forced labour. The question of compulsion is a social, economic, and material issue, as well as one of legal and political relations. Marx characterizes the use of state compulsion to labour as one preliminary to capital using the sheer force of economic relations to create a surplus of labourers.

Centuries are required before the "free" worker, owing to the greater development of the capitalist mode of production, makes a voluntary agreement, i.e. is compelled by social conditions to sell the whole of his active life, his very capacity for labour, in return for the price of his customary means of subsistence, to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage.<sup>4</sup>

The history of capital is one of expropriating the producer from the means of production, separating the peasant from the land, and producing the means of subsistence for the workers from that land. Capital then turns the member of a homestead into a 'free' worker, not only through the use of state power to expropriate African tribes from most of the land and taxing the residents of the reserves, but also through the circulation of the commodities of capitalist production in competition with the use values of the homesteads. Those who have been expropriated are then free workers.

Free workers, in the double sense that they neither form part of the means of production themselves, as would be the case with slaves, serfs, etc., nor do they own the means of production, as would be the case with self-employed peasant prop-

rietors. The free workers are therefore free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own. 5

It is then in this sense that workers enter 'freely' into contracts of service with employers which are both ultra-exploitative and oppressive. As commodity relations have developed in South Africa, the role of the state in directly compelling Africans to engage in wage labour (in the form of hut and head tax) has receded in importance as African workers have sought the means of subsistence through wage labour. The form of direct coercion (the *corvée*) became wholly replaced by the need to satisfy the material needs of the homestead.

Men were then forced to work because they were slaves of others; men are now forced to work because they are the slaves of their necessities. 6

With the increase in the surplus population available for wage labour, the inequalities of capitalist society are increased — from a society in which capital suffered perennial shortage of labour at the wages offered, capitalist production now continues with long queues waiting the shoddiest recruiter.

The forced labour of capitalist society does not depend on the over-development of the state nor even the imbalance in bargaining power between capitalist and workseeker, but on wage labour itself: the division of the product into necessary and surplus product and necessary and surplus labour. Without the theory of surplus value it is impossible to explain the relationship between the forms of political oppression experienced by the African masses over centuries and the level of working class resistance.

### Accumulation and resistance

The very high rates of growth in the early 1960s were not sustained towards the end of the decade as the economy faced a balance of payments crisis with the inability of manufacturing to go beyond import substitution

to compete on international markets. Despite these difficulties in maintaining a high rate of growth, the apartheid state pressed ahead with its plan to devolve political power to the black petty bourgeoisie and chiefs in the Bantustans. These developments have to be related both to the question of a mounting liberation struggle in Southern Africa and the Wankie military struggle in 1967 in which African National Congress guerillas clashed with the Rhodesian armed forces. The acceleration of the Bantustan program was, however, more than a response to external antagonism to the apartheid state; it was also particularly related to the growth in the industrial reserve army inordinately larger than the possibilities of employment and to the ideological control over the African working class. The creation of 'territorial authorities' followed rapidly in the late 1960s: Ciskei (November 1968), Bophuthatswana (December 1968), Lebowa (August 1969), Venda (October 1969), and KwaZulu (May 1970).<sup>7</sup> One of the first tasks of these new authorities was the establishment of the tribal labour bureaux and the collection of labour registration fees, bringing the migrant workers under tighter control and making the new contract labour regime work. Politically, the Bantustan leadership was outspoken on the need for Africans to own more land, for an end to the 'kaffir salaries' they earned, and for themselves to be acknowledged as the authentic leaders of the oppressed masses.<sup>8</sup> While many of the debates of these authorities took tribal solidarity as a basis for ideological orientation, the leadership had to adopt a nationalistic stance both to gain some measure of acceptance by the workers and rural poor and some reputation for radicalism in international circles. The petty bourgeois leadership projected themselves as having made a 'historic compromise' with the apartheid state in the interests of the people as a whole, while internal opposition was vigorously repressed.

The falling pace of accumulation in the late 1960s had a considerable negative effect on the stevedoring workers. The boom of the earlier period had demanded massive imports of machinery and raw materials, and

with the decline in economic growth imports fell sharply. The tonnage landed in Durban fell correspondingly causing a shrinkage in prime cargo handled by the workers, even though the level of exports held steady. Exports of primary products such as maize, manganese ore, and coal were, however, increasingly mechanized and did not provide the same demand for labour-time.

Table 7.1

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<u>Cargo landed in Durban, 1962-1970, tonnes</u>			
1962	4,323	1967	4,217
1963	5,568	1968	2,786
1964	7,621	1969	2,618
1965	8,469	1970	4,267
1966	8,557		

Source: Statistical Year Book, 1976

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Employment in the Durban docks also started to decline from an all-time high level in the mid-1960s both due to declining tonnages landed and to the increased cargo handled per worker. The DSLSC experienced the highest employment figures in 1964 during which an average of 2,923 workers were employed. By July 1969 employment had declined to 2,211 workers. With a considerable decrease in real earnings between 1964/65, when the last wage increases were introduced through WD 251, and 1967/68 amounting to 14.6 per cent, the workers were expecting a considerable wage increase from the wage investigation of 1968.<sup>9</sup> A contemporary study of the Durban docks in this period argued that the dissatisfaction and unrest in the docks which had been experienced previously was a result of the casual or togt labour system, and that with the formation of the DSLSC the hardships of the past had been removed.

The security of permanent employment, the provision of adequate accommodation and of a canteen in the compound at the Point and regular paid leave have resulted in a contented labour force. This is evident to any visitor to the compound, as is also the pride evinced by the Company's management in its achievements. <sup>10</sup>

This management was confident that it had the interests of the workers at heart, indeed, it claimed to have set the wage investigations of the stevedoring trade by the Wage Board into motion. A system of communication had been developed which was in accord with what the management considered were the cultural and particularly linguistic problems in the workplace. Operating with an ethnological model of African workers, the company developed a train of communication which followed the line of command both at work and in the compound. Rather than seeing the workers as developing new industrial and political aspirations through the harsh discipline of the capitalist labour process, and solidarity from their concentration and oppression by capital, management put forward the view of the African stevedore trapped in backward magico-religious belief, superstitious, fatalistic and tribally orientated.

The Bantu has his own background or environment, and he is its product because of a series of complex influences: religion and beliefs, social organization, rules of conduct (uhlonipha), political systems, traditional economic activities on which is superimposed a modern techno-industrial system, a particular milieu, his tribal history, etc. The unique role of the Ancestral Spirits is common to all Abantu, for instance, and it is common knowledge that the Ancestors jealously guard the ancient traditions. <sup>11</sup>

From this perspective the relationship between employers and workers is one of cultural contact, of reason against obscurantism, rather than one of inevitable conflict between exploiters and exploited. The lack of understanding of the labour process and the aspirations of the workers was not one of misunderstanding, however, as the authority of the

employers and the hierarchical system of command rested on such ideological formulations. For management in a trade which actively sought out workers from the most remote rural areas and which was dependent on appropriating the maximum surplus labour from the labour force, an ethnological perspective not only reinforced a strategy of divide and rule but also served as a means of ideologically justifying the role of the indunas as the sergeant-majors of capital.<sup>12</sup> The communication system set out by management simply reproduced the lines of authority within the company, with the exception that the indunas at the workplace were allowed to have direct access to the management. The hierarchical structure provided for three intermediary tiers between the workers and management both in the compound and at work, although in principle no intermediary had the right to refuse to refer a complainant to the official higher up the ladder of authority. Unlike communication within a capitalist enterprise with a trade union, the only type of upward communication conceived of was that of an individual with a personal grievance; there was no provision even in theory for the collective views of the workers to be communicated. The whole edifice of 'communication' obviously depended on patronage and client relationship between labourers and bureaucrats.

#### Wages, tax, and strike action

Both the employers' ideological conception of the workers and the hierarchical structure of communication were strained by the wage investigation of 1968 and finally exposed by the most important industrial strike of the 1960s. The preliminary agitation was both against the higher taxation imposed by the Bantu Taxation Act of 1969 and in support of the demand for R14 a week.<sup>13</sup> This agitation and the attempt of a group of labourers to present their demands to the Wage Board indicated that after the devastation of mass expulsion of strikers from Durban in 1959 the underground organization of the stevedores was being revived and seeking new techniques of putting

forward demands under the vicious repression of both the DSLSC and the state. Even during the consolidation of rigorous control over the harbour workers in the early 1960s the employers had not gone without any challenge to their authority. Workers employed by Consolidated Stevedoring and Forwarding Agency (a component of the DSLSC) struck on 27 December 1961 in support of a demand for an annual bonus and were subsequently prosecuted.<sup>14</sup> Again a strike had occurred in March 1966 by workers employed by C.G. Smith and Company in support of demands for wage increase, a tea break, overtime, and overalls.<sup>15</sup> The most consistent working class action, however, built up towards the end of the 1960s. The strikes which followed demonstrated the solidarity of the workers and their rejection of management's ideology and the control of the indunas.

A long time elapsed between the investigation by the Wage Board and the final determination. The first sitting was in Durban on 24 June 1968, and the report with its recommendations appeared on 28 August 1968. The formal recommendation was published on 8 November 1968, and the objection stage passed by 5 February 1969, almost eight months after the investigation started.<sup>16</sup> Shortly before the final determination appeared early in April, agitation started against the tax system. A leaflet on brown paper was pinned to the Company notice board stating that the workers were being taxed on wages they had not earned. The writer said that the workers were being taxed on R14 a week while they were being paid a basic wage of only R6. The author of the pamphlet said the facts could be checked by asking the clerk who dealt with taxation at the Bantu Commissioner's office. The workers were protesting against the imposition of income tax on their earnings over and above the general tax, hut tax, and other fees imposed on them. With the enforcement of the Bantu Taxation Act Number 92 of 1969 all African workers earning above R360 a year were liable to income tax.<sup>17</sup> The increased taxation of African workers was not only a means by which the state took back what wage increases had been

granted during the 1960s boom but particularly a way of gathering revenue to pay for the increasing expenditure on the Bantustan program. On the basis of the principle that black workers should be taxed to pay for their own repression and services such as education, the increased taxation (which made all previous special taxes levied on Africans seem puny by comparison) was the burden the workers had to carry for the generous salaries and limousines of the Bantustan leadership. African workers who were not earning even as much as poverty datum line were expected to pay higher rates of tax than white workers.

The system of income tax gathering from stevedoring workers had been gradually tightened from the promulgation of the Act. Previously it had been the duty of the tax officials to investigate the income of workers who fell into one of the income tax brackets and, if necessary, to prosecute workers who had not paid. Not unexpectedly there had been a complete lack of cooperation from the workers - Dreyer spoke of the workers using tax notice slips as toilet paper. With the migrant labour system, a fairly high turnover of workers, and many workers away on leave at any time, the tax officials no doubt faced many problems in securing prosecutions. The system was, however, abruptly tightened up when the DSLSC agreed to submit the earnings of all stevedoring workers to the tax office. Under this new arrangement many more workers actually paid income tax and the final earnings of workers were reduced correspondingly. Quite why the workers were being assessed at R14 a week, as the pamphlet writer protested, is not clear. This could be an estimate of the average earnings of the workers over a week as on the basis of four days work, Sunday work, and twelve hours overtime, the final earnings would have amounted to just under this figure.<sup>18</sup>

A second pamphlet followed, demanding that wages should be increased and suggesting that the workers take up the question of taxation

with the Bantu Commissioner and tell him they were earning R6 and not R14. The workers rejected the principle of taxation of earnings, particularly on the variable part of the wage - the daily allowances, Sunday time, overtime, and cargo allowances. With the more rigorous means of enforcement many workers would be paying income tax for the first time. As agitation against the tax system spread, and open dissatisfaction was expressed, the management acted together with the Department of Labour to prepare an explanation of the new wage rates to be introduced by the wage determination. The local branch of the Department of Labour contacted the head office in Pretoria which had a copy of WD 308 due for release on 3 April 1969. An advance copy of the document was flown down from Pretoria, but the details could not be released until the Government Gazette was published. Extracts from the determination were translated into Zulu, the more important sections explained in some detail, and copies made.<sup>19</sup>

On Good Friday, 4 April 1969, the wage determination came into effect by being published in the Government Gazette.<sup>20</sup> The translations were posted on the notice boards and explained by management. The next day the strike broke out. A group of labourers blockaded the booking-on tables in the form of a picket and the other workers refused to break through. The strikers demanded a basic wage of R14 and an end to taxation on overtime. About a thousand workers sat down in rows outside the Company's offices. Although it was reported that the indunas, gangwaymen, and winchmen did not join the strike these workers were laid off by the action of the labourers and the harbour was crippled. At Maydon Wharf, where a compound accommodating about 400 workers was administered by Grinrod and Gersigny (Pty) Ltd, only a handful of stevedores went to work. The bulk of the workers stayed in their compound after they heard from the railway workers that the strike had been initiated at the DSLSC. Work on about thirty-five ships was halted, and the losses sustained by the shipping companies per ship (estimated at R1,000) grew with each day of the strike. The

police were mobilized with calls being broadcast at rugby grounds for policemen to report for duty in uniform. The South African Police Mobile Squad was placed on standby and the docks systematically patrolled by the Flying Squad.

Behind this display of force the employers, state departments, and police debated the best means of breaking the strike. The Saturday afternoon Daily News reported in headlines that the stevedores were facing the sack, the type of reporting which would have been likely to create despondency among the workers. 'It is understood that if agreement is not reached by tonight the entire labour force will be axed and efforts will be made to replace them immediately by Pondos.'<sup>21</sup> Two sessions of emergency talks were held on Saturday between the senior officials of the Security Branch, the Departments of Labour and Bantu Administration, and the directors of the four stevedoring companies. The open coalescence of the state apparatus and employers, the bodies of armed men and wielders of social and political power, took place to defeat the solidarity of the workers. Negotiations within the ruling class in advanced capitalist countries take place in the privacy of the club or are carried out in the utmost secrecy for fear of exposure, but here took place without embarrassment in front of the eyes of the strikers.<sup>22</sup> The questions debated were obviously not published but must have involved the possibility of concessions, the fact that any concessions could inflame strikes throughout industry, and the possibility of marshalling a substitute labour force at short notice. The most important issue for all concerned was, however, how to crush the strike and wreak the most devastating blow against the leadership. The difficulty faced by the ruling class in action was the impressive solidarity of the workers and the complete blending of the leaders with the mass of the labourers.

In an attempt to soften the resolve of the workers, the DSLSC management and the Department of Labour called on the workers to negotiate. At Saturday lunchtime the Divisional Inspector of Labour, Jackson, addressed the stevedores and advised them to return to work. This attempt to get the workers back on the ships without any concessions incensed the strikers - 'he was drowned out by a chorus of angry jeers'.<sup>23</sup> The Security Branch and the Divisional Commissioner for Port Natal, Brigadier J. Benade, visited the compound in the afternoon. A tax official from the office of the Bantu Commissioner explained the tax system, but to no effect. During the afternoon the workers disappeared to the nearby beerhalls, but returned at 1700 to hear another address by Jackson. He explained the wage determination in detail, but the workers refused to accept the rates offered. The strikers demanded that the basic wage of R6 a week be increased to R14 a week, the figure at which their income was taxed. They shouted that the overtime they earned was 'their sweat' and not to be taxed, and even that work in the sugar cane fields or coal mines was preferable to working for the oppressive DSLSC. They told reporters that they had to work four hours overtime regularly, making their normal shift a fourteen hour working day. Jackson told the strikers that no decision had been made during the afternoon talks between the companies, police, and government officials, and that they should return to work because their action was illegal.<sup>24</sup> Negotiations would continue on the workers' grievances. The strikers said they were 'ready to go back home to Zululand' if their demands were not met. 'What do you do with a woman you don't want?'<sup>25</sup> The crowd of several hundred jeering strikers then left the company premises and said they would return to hear the employers' offer on the following day.

On Sunday morning workers who crowded the premises of the DSLSC were told that their demands had been rejected. A meeting of officials from the Department of Labour and Bantu Administration, the employers,

and senior police officers had decided to force the workers back at the wages laid down by WD 308 or to expel them from the town. The workers rejected the employers' terms and were dismissed.<sup>26</sup> Under the gaze of the massed police near riot vehicles, the workers were told to queue at the pay windows to collect their severance pay. The 1,043 dismissed strikers were given four hours to leave Durban by the Bantu Administration and the police who maintained surveillance.

By Monday, 7 April 1969, it was estimated there were 40 ships needing stevedoring gangs.<sup>27</sup> At least two ships were able to persuade their crews to do the work of the stevedores and to sail: the American freighter African Mercury and the S.A. Nederburg. The Safmarine flag-ship, Table Bay, made use of its Coloured crew to augment what stevedoring labour became available. Most of the sailors, however, refused to scab on the striking stevedores. The stevedoring companies worked furiously to build up skeleton gangs and get the cargo moving. Estimates varied on how long it would take to bring the movement of cargo back to normal. On Monday the Daily News shipping correspondent wrote that cargo working would be disrupted for at least seven days, but by Tuesday morning the Natal Mercury was more optimistic, reporting the docks 'almost normal' although shipping companies had lost thousands of rand.<sup>28</sup> The management strategy was to take back sufficient strikers who reapplied for work after careful screening with some of the labourers who had disappeared during the strike and trickled back after the mass dismissal. These workers would make up a core of trained workers to rebuild the stevedoring labour units. On Sunday afternoon the compound staff and drivers employed by the stevedoring companies were sent out to the beerhalls and further into the townships to gather workers to make up the gangs. These workers were taken on as casuals, but it appears that others were recruited on contract from areas in Northern Zululand. Influx control was apparently suspended immediately after the dismissals, a measure

which created a short-term surplus in labour supply, and guarded the employers against having to pay considerably higher wages to scabbing workers.<sup>29</sup> About 450 of the dismissed stevedores, and those who had kept in the background during the strike, were re-engaged and by Monday afternoon there were 1,186 workers employed by the stevedoring companies. Skeleton crews were operating on 23 ships on Monday morning, and by 1 p.m. it was claimed that all ships were fully manned. By Tuesday there were 1,502 workers available, plus another 250 for the night shift.<sup>30</sup> These figures demonstrate that the DSLSC was able to build up a considerable labour force from the reserve army immediately available in the city and environs, but still was falling short of the required strength of about 2,400. The bland statement by the manager of the DSLSC that there was ample manpower on which to call to replace those workers who had been paid off, and that the pool would be back to the necessary strength 'within the next few days', did not take account of the enormous problems faced by employers in training new workers and bringing productivity up to previous levels.<sup>31</sup> The unqualified optimism of the employers, wanting to reassure the shipping companies of their capable handling of the challenge to their control by the workers, belied the severity of a crisis which would grip the docks in the early 1970s.

### The strike: an assessment

The stevedoring strike, defeated though it was and bringing no advantages to the workers in concessions, was one of the most significant events in the post-Sharpeville period resistance to the apartheid state. It signalled the revival of black working class action after the dormancy of vicious repression and unparalleled economic growth; uncompromising hostility to the employers and the apartheid state and a revolutionary consciousness both of their needs and the necessity to overcome the institutions of violence used against the workers. An article in the African Communist

commented that the 'unparalleled' strike of the stevedores demonstrated the growth of underground internal resistance and the workers' rebuttal of a view that apartheid was an all-pervasive system of oppression from which they had no escape.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the demands of trade unions under collective bargaining, the workers demanded a revolutionary transformation of the wage system (an increase in basic wages of 133 per cent) and simultaneous changes in state policy (no taxation on overtime). The workers did not regard these demands as fantastic, as did the bourgeois press, and were confident that with a solid strike these goals could be achieved.<sup>33</sup> There was no basis for negotiation with the employers and state departments outside an acknowledgement of the validity of these claims and the recognition of their right to strike.

Although the workers' demands concerned their conditions of work they combined both political and economic aspects as class demands. The wage demand expressed a determination not only to make up for the loss in real wages through inflation and to compensate for growing impoverishment in the reserves, but to alter the material basis of the cheap labour system: low wages and 'defenceless' workers. Even though the R14 basic wage demanded did not exceed the poverty datum line it was considerably in advance of the basic wage of black workers in most industries in Durban at that time, and particularly the level of labourers in sectors such as wood-working, commerce, chemicals, and textiles. A decisive victory for the stevedoring workers would have given a lead not only to these workers, but to all those workers housed in compounds and regarded as ultra-exploitable by their employers. Despite the ability of the employers to subject the stevedoring workers as contract workers to intense exploitation, it was they who led the revival in black working class struggles with demands and consciousness in advance of those African workers having most legal security. Although in the early 1960s it had been thought that the common oppression of African workers dictated a strategy of general strikes for general demands

'rather than the traditional trade union pattern of each section fighting piecemeal for its particular demands in each particular industry or trade', with the rooting out of coordinated working class leadership, the concrete demands of advanced workers in certain sectors provided the basis for the forward movement of the workers after the deafening silence of the 1960s.<sup>34</sup> This source of continued vitality in the working class movement could, however, only become a rallying point for the workers as a whole if the industrial struggles were broadened to include all types of workers in regional general strikes. The decline in industrial battles in the early 1960s was explained in the following way:

It is not that they (the workers) do not have plenty of reason for striking: it is because they know that if one group of workers come out on strike on their own, all the forces of the state and the police will be brought in to hammer them, to arrest them, to victimise and deport them.<sup>35</sup>

It was precisely this dilemma which the stevedoring workers faced in throwing themselves into the struggle against the employers and the state; the broadening of the workers' strike movement was, without coordinated underground organization and demands, dependent itself on a victory for the workers in the docks. The deepening experience of workers' organization in conditions of extreme repression and the rising mood of resistance meant that the defeat of the 1969 stevedore strike did not bring demoralization, but a hatred of the DSLSC and its oppressive actions, and a steady increase of strike action in other industries.

The most outstanding lesson the stevedores had learned from the repression of the post-war period was that leadership of the workers' struggles had to come from underground organization. Gone was the era of open mobilization and charismatic leadership as exercised by Phungula during the 1940s; the possibility of democratic assemblies and elected leadership had also passed. In the period of fierce repression, leadership consisted

of the ability to crystallize the common demands of the workers through informal groupings and pamphlets. The most elementary principle in these tactics was to refuse to elect spokesmen to negotiate with the employers; those capable workers able to present arguments on behalf of all the workers were not to be exposed to victimization. Instead, assembled strikers shouted their demands in unison: the employers then had to accept their claims in toto or not at all. Negotiations and communication between employers and strikers was then limited to the employers making a statement and getting a reaction from the workers in shouted agreement or disagreement. This feature of the strike refutes a theory of strikes under national oppression being a result of a 'breakdown of communication', open communication of collective demands being only expressed during the strike. The communication flowing in the open confrontation of exploiters and exploited is not in doubt, the breakdown is that of the power of the employers and between the fundamental aspirations of the workers and the demands of the profit system.

The growth of the underground and secret organization of the stevedoring workers was a product not only of their determination to build class organization but also of their seasoning in the hard school of resistance. Organization of this subtlety and versatility, involving investigation into the tax system, anonymous pamphlets, fixing the time for the strike and the setting up of pickets, was evidence of an active intelligence within the ranks of the labourers possessing a historical class consciousness. These workers were aware of the history of class struggles in South Africa as well as their own resistance and exerted leadership through ideas and strategies rather than through personality. The pamphlets which appeared on the notice boards under the noses of the company officials were models of the new style. Persuasive rather than prescriptive, informing workers of the tax system and inviting them to investigate the truth of the claims for themselves, the style was democratic rather than oratorical, feeling out the

widest unity before expressing demands. This form of agitation aimed to build up the demands of the workers through discussion rather than announce demands in an autonomous manner. These techniques never allowed the leadership to be separated from the workers and ensured democratic decisions without having the possibility of mass meetings and open committees. It was this capable and secret organization which achieved the impressive solidarity of the strikers in the face of threats and cajolings by employers and officials. The Department of Labour was forced into a reluctant admission that the attitude of the workers refusing to bring forward leaders was reasonable. These officials were struck by the unity of the workers and their organization which held fast against pleas to return to work and the pervasive threat of the police.<sup>36</sup>

While all commentators on the strike were agreed there had been agitation and organization, the theories about this agitation varied from the most exotic to arguments that reforms would have to be made. The strike caused widespread comment and discussion not only among the workers but also in employer circles and the press. The 'repressionists' (company officials and 'authorities') tended to argue that a conspiracy had been made against the employers, while the liberal press and white labour aristocracy belittled the agitation and argued that African workers should be allowed trade unions under white leadership.<sup>37</sup> The repressionists argued that the strike had been caused by agitators, 'a handful of trouble-makers', who intimidated the others into striking.<sup>38</sup> Undisclosed 'authorities' believed that the strike (which was similar to that of 1959 to the exact day) was planned by secret elements among the workers for the holiday weekend and 'could hardly have come at a more embarrassing time for the authorities'.<sup>39</sup> The DSLSC management said that workers who demanded and struck for a basic wage of R14 a week feared intimidation from the groups of workers who mounted the picket on the booking-on tables.<sup>40</sup> The collective discipline among the workers was explained as

the fear of 'being sent to Coventry' by their workmates. The most sophisticated theory, one put forward by Dreyer, was that the strike was a revolt against the DSLSC stimulated by the indunas who wanted a return to the old system of labour recruitment which gave them the right to hire workers each day. This responsibility meant they had greater powers and were paid a special allowance.

The management and police conspiracy theory credited the workers' underground with almost magical powers, manipulating the mass of the workers at will, and possessing ruthless discipline. This line of thinking was more an attempt to present the DSLSC as a reasonable institution employing devoted and docile workers, rather than a serious attempt to face the workers' demands. The more fanciful ideas reflected the bad faith of management, and possibly their uneasiness at their ruthless use of power.<sup>41</sup> The suggestion that the majority of workers were opposed to the demand of R14 a week and the strike itself is not borne out by the fact that more than a thousand were prepared to be dismissed rather than accept the DSLSC's terms. These workers could have melted away during the strike and waited until the 'trouble' had passed, but they preferred to stand firm with the active group and suffer the consequences. While some workers did take the soft option by staying away while the employers and officials decided what to do with the strikers, it was never seriously contended that they stayed away because they feared intimidation. Throughout the strike the workers were closely watched both by company officials and a large force of police; the intimidation and constant threat of violence came from the employers and the police. The suggestion that the strike was started by dissatisfied indunas appears more credible in the light of the narrowing wage differential between their earnings and those of other workers, but is also on reflection rather ridiculous. During the 1959 strike it was the indunas who got a wage increase who were assaulted by the workers for trying to break their strike. In the following years in which the indunas were given

greater powers on the ships there is no indication that the relationship between the supervisors and supervised became any warmer. While the strikers may have shouted the old system of work was better because of the intense exploitation which followed the formation of the DSLSC as a supreme strike-breaking instrument, this could not be interpreted as the labourers wanting to revert to the casual labour system which could be managed in the interests of the indunas.<sup>42</sup> The indunas, gangwaymen, and winchmen, did not join the strike and the labourers made no demands on their behalf. From the outset the agitation centred on the most exploited and oppressed section of the workers, the labourers, and all the evidence indicates that it was the leaders of the labourers who took direction of the strike.

A somewhat different response came from the liberal press and white labour. Concerned with the prospect of unprecedented struggles by African workers, the liberal bourgeoisie was reluctant to adopt the view that agitators were responsible for the dock strike. The editorial in the Daily News on Monday afternoon, 7 April 1969, deprecated the practice of blaming 'agitators' for precipitating pay disputes when black wages were involved: 'Perhaps a handful of mischief-makers has tried to exploit the docks dispute for its own ends. But is this so surprising when Africans are debarred by law from engaging in collective bargaining for better pay and conditions of service?' This rejection of racial discrimination in collective bargaining was tempered by the editor's view that African trade unions should be formed under white guidance to be 'tutored by whites in the ways of mature and responsible bargaining'. In the meantime, employers had an 'acute responsibility' of reviewing the wages of black workers. The editor did not consider how the managed African trade unions could be grafted on to the cheap labour system, his concern was to reduce the dock workers' struggle to an economic question and to suggest reforms to bring the workers' leaders into the open. The forward thrust of the black

working class represented by the dock strike attracted the sympathy of white labour leaders and democrats. Frank Mossman, trade union leader of carpenters in Durban, protested that the only way African workers had of bringing their grievances to the notice of their employers was through breaking the law. Dockers' leaders were castigated by employers and the police as agitators and banished from Durban. He proposed accepting 'all African workers in "key" industries as organised workers who are legally entitled to enter into collective bargaining under our recognised conciliation machinery'. Other writers to the letter columns were also sympathetic to the dockers' cause, protesting against Government and security police support for the employers and suggesting double shifts in the docks to increase employment and bring the exhaustion of the workers to an end.<sup>43</sup> The liberal bourgeoisie was generally critical of the inept and oppressive way in which the stevedoring companies and the police had handled the strike, and the company officials appeared defensive and uneasy.

Finally, the public criticism of the DSLSC was to little effect. The company and the police had secured their objective in inflicting severe punishment on the strikers and mobilizing a substitute labour force from the reserve army of labour in the city. With the workers' demands requiring both a drastic revision of wages and changes in the tax system, the possibility of compromise was limited. No concessions were offered, the employers standing firm on the wage rates set by WD 308 and the state departments adamant that the new tax system be vigorously enforced. While some modification in wages could be considered (but turned down), any compromises on the tax system would have national implications. The state would have been seen to have to retreat from implementing legislation by the workers' resistance, and the new tax system being introduced would have been nullified. In the early 1960s it had been argued that industrial struggles should be supported by revolutionaries 'for a single victory, even

a small one, in a single strike, may be enough to spark off and inspire a whole series of similar actions among other workers, a process which the authorities may be unable to subdue'.<sup>44</sup> The same point was well understood by the capitalist state acting on behalf of all employers in putting down the dock workers' strike. Did this mean that the underground which brought the workers to an uncompromising struggle against the employers and the state was over-confident and had made a basic miscalculation of the relative strength of exploited and exploiters? There is no easy answer to this question, the underground having raised the questions without spelling out a strategy. Possibly the advanced workers expected workers in other industries to join in a common struggle against the tax system. In the course of the strike certain weaknesses in the workers' position became apparent: the fact that the gangwaymen and winchmen, who had benefited through increased differentiation from the labourers, stood aside for the first time; the 'melting away' of a minority of the labourers during the strike; a tendency of some workers to think that breaking contract and 'going home' would be the strongest penalty against the DSLSC, and the ready availability of scab labour in the city. But if the employers were not to compromise, then neither were the workers. The late 1960s marked a new sense of urgency in the black working class and a determination to resist whatever the consequences. Throughout the 1960s the objective conditions of proletarianization were becoming evident in longer contracts and greater rural impoverishment; the subjective conditions were now coming to the fore.

### Crisis in the port and workers' resistance

The crushing of the workers' strike and engagement of new recruits on the employers' conditions solved the immediate impasse faced by the stevedoring companies, but in the period which followed the companies and SARH entered into a crisis of productivity and efficiency on a larger scale

than ever before. Public criticism of the harbour authorities became general as the queues of ships standing idle outside the port increased, and the shipping companies operating the South African route introduced a surcharge on freight to Durban because of the costly delays they faced. As the crisis deepened, solutions to the problem of overall productivity of the workers in the port which had never been considered before, such as providing a two shift system and incentive bonus schemes, were discussed by the employers. The memory of the suppression of the 1969 dock strike came to haunt the DSLSC company officials as the workers entered into a phase of unprecedented mass strikes and resistance to the apartheid state.<sup>45</sup> As the conditions for workers to increase their resistance to the employers improved, the workers' demands increased proportionally and their organizations took shape in the semi-legal sphere of unregistered trade unions. For the white workers in the port employed by the SARH, the crisis marked the beginning of the end of their employment, and their fairly swift despatch to other sectors of the economy. Private capital, particularly commerce, demanded a 'black port' in which African workers would take over all operative and most of the supervisory work in the docks, and white workers would be either transferred to other railway work or shifted to technical tasks. While the most dramatic changes took place in SARH employment, the stevedoring workers were obviously not unaffected and took advantage of the increasing importance of African workers in the docks and the reorganization of production to press home their demands.

The port crisis itself was both complex and often contradictory. The main problem for capital in the docks seemed to be the slowing rate at which stevedoring and railway workers were able to get cargo landed and railed away from the port. There were no open complaints about the movement of exports. The problem as presented in the liberal press was that the railway administration was unable to move the landed cargo away from the port with sufficient speed because it was committed to using white

labour and had delayed introducing mechanization. Quite why there should be a fall off in productivity is not clear; superficially it was argued that sufficient white workers were not available and that state departments were always inefficient. A curious feature of the crisis in the early 1970s was that it resulted from an increase of tonnages landed at Durban which were nothing as large as those of the 1960s, during which there had been no complaints from shipping companies of congestion and declining productivity. While 8,557 tonnes were landed in Durban in 1966, the revival of the rate of growth in 1970 only increased tonnage landed to 4,267 tonnes, although this was a considerable increase on the 1969 figure of 2,618 tonnes. But the rate at which cargo was being handled was slowing down even during the late 1960s when the tonnage landed was declining steadily; the increase in imports in 1970 only served to bring the crisis out into the open.<sup>46</sup> The whole question was one of great controversy for capital, with a sudden increase in the number of articles appearing in the press criticizing the SARH and calling for the displacement of white labour. The unseemly public disputes and allegations, with the sharpest criticism coming from the shipping companies, indicated the severity of the crisis. The docks had been converted from a quiet backwater of the accumulation process into the controversial centre of discussion because of the importance of transport both to the rising turnover of capital in South Africa and capital locked up in idle ships. As Marx has argued, transport becomes crucial for capital when the distance of the market from the point of production is long; the speed of the physical movement of commodities is then closely related to the turnover of productive capital.<sup>47</sup> The shipping delays were adding to the time that exports to South Africa were in the form of commodity-capital, and leading to a decline in the return on capital for exporting companies. The pressure for speeding up the movement of commodities would then come from the shipping companies which relied on a higher velocity of commodities to realize the capital invested in the ships.<sup>48</sup>

Since the dock workers had managed to cope with the huge cargoes landed and shipped in the mid-1960s, the declining productivity in the early 1970s has to be explained in terms of the lack of willingness and ability of workers to keep up high levels of output. Immediately after the strikers had been dismissed, the press was forecasting that the delays caused by the strike would last a week.<sup>49</sup> The disruption to cargo handling in fact lasted considerably longer, and it seems as though the congestion caused by the 1969 strike and the lower productivity which resulted from employing new workers carried over into the period of rising imports causing the extraordinary delays in 1971. The stevedoring company worked on a short-term policy of replacing the strikers with any workers who were willing to scab; these workers were apparently paid on a daily basis and came from the Durban townships. The longer-term strategy of the company was to replace this 'casual' labour (which the company may have had to pay higher wages) with contract workers from the distant reserves. By Tuesday, 8 April 1969, the company had sufficient labour to man the ships but the workers were inexperienced and inefficient. As the shipping correspondent of the Daily News reported: 'many of the men are unfamiliar with ship-working and there is a consequent loss of productivity and the possibility of delays to shipping for the rest of this week'. The DSLSC was taking active steps to visit the reserves to recruit permanent labour on contract, and possibly to call back about 300 or 400 regular workers who were on leave. On the following day, Wednesday, the recruiting drive was continuing, the work was going slower than the pre-strike rate of handling, but the gangs were being reinforced by experienced workers and the 'new casuals' working together. The future of the strike-breakers was by no means secure, but if they proved to be efficient the DSLSC said it was possible some of them would be taken on to the permanent staff.<sup>50</sup>

The strike threw the complex system of labour recruitment and leave cycles out of phase. By 1969 the DSLSC estimated the average length

of contract was nine months; in the post-strike situation each nine month group had to be evened out, a difficult task as the company had been forced to take on a large number of workers suddenly. The new contract workers had to be trained and incorporated in a SLU under an induna.<sup>51</sup> The uneven labour cycles, with a large mass of workers starting in April, were eventually smoothed out by giving some workers early leave. The DSLSC implied that the labour supply situation was soon under control and daily meetings were held with the stevedoring companies to study and improve on the productivity of the new workers. Although there were not persistent complaints of delays and congestion, the general air of optimism masked the deeper problems management faced in reorganizing the handling of cargo.

In the absence of statistics on the rates of landing and shipping cargo per gang, statistics on the accident frequency rate give some idea of the disturbance in the pattern of work. The work of loading and unloading ships is fraught with danger: the area of movement is confined, considerable masses are being moved, and the cranes are lifting and lowering cargo directly above the workers in the hold who are unprotected against any falling objects. The accident rate is not a purely random figure, it indicates both management's concern to reduce the figures (in the interests of cutting its assessment in terms of the Workman's Compensation Act and in attempting to improve the morale of the workers) and the relative experience of the workers in keeping up high levels of output without endangering themselves. The accident rate costs the DSLSC money, both in terms of its assessment for accident insurance and in terms of lost time, and also reflects the efficiency of supervision on the ships.<sup>52</sup> The effect of a mass influx of inexperienced workers in stevedoring is shown by the figures of the accident frequency rate supplied by the company. The figures represent lost lives, severe injuries, as well as the most common injuries to feet and hands.

Table 7.2

Month	<u>Accident frequency rate</u>			
	1967	1968	1969	1970
January	257	143	131	205
February	180	135	131	291
March	183	129	127	249
April	157	104	203	212
May	148	185	274	145
June	203	169	313	227
July	182	189	308	218
August	249	138	277	210
September	141	125	276	204
October	165	160	217	227
November	127	124	228	223
December	168	129	172	219
Average monthly	180	144	221	219

(Note: the accident frequency rate is calculated by dividing the number of man-hours worked into the total number of lost-time accidents multiplied by a million. The frequency rate is thus expressed as a rate per million man-hours.)

Between 1967 and 1968 the accident rate showed a tendency to decline, due to the growing experience of the workers, and a campaign by management to cut its WCA assessment. Helmets were supplied to the workers in 1968 and the company insisted that the workers bought tough boots before being allowed on the ships. The improvement these measures had on the accident rate was completely nullified by the mass dismissal. While the last time the accident rate had risen above 200 was in August 1967, in the month of the strike, April 1969, the rate soared above the 200 mark to an unprecedented 313 in June 1969. The strike had a long-term effect in terms of the workers' ability to safeguard themselves from injury; the 1970 figures do not show much of an improvement, most months recording a figure well over 200.

The high level of accidents indicates how the DSLSC was prepared to squander the lives and potential labour-power of the workers to regain control over the workers and speed up the pace of work to copy with the rising level of imports. The high level of accidents after the strike proved the importance of the collective skills possessed by the gangs of labourers. In the struggle to regain productivity, management was more concerned with the tonnage of cargo handled per gang than their safety, but despite this compulsion the number of ships anchored outside the harbour grew larger. The high accident rates seemed to show that collective skills of the workers were taking longer to rebuild than management had anticipated.

Although the stevedoring workers load or unload virtually all cargo handled in Durban, their productivity does simply express the efficiency of the port as a whole.<sup>53</sup> The pace at which cargo is handled depends on the cooperative labour of the gangs of railway workers, the crane drivers, whose work is central, and the stevedoring gangs. The efficiency of the port depended on the coordination of these workers as well as other factors which were more technical: the breakdown of machinery (particularly the older cranes) and delays in getting importers' clearance papers. The problems faced by the railways in moving cargo out of the sheds tended to work their way back to the ships, clogged sheds slowed down the pace of discharge from the ships. And it was the rate of handling cargo on the ships which was the prime concern of the shipping companies pressing for the fastest turnabout for their ships.

The port crisis was undoubtedly set in motion by the dissatisfaction of the workers, the stevedores' strike, and the workers' exhaustion from prolonged hours of work. Holiday periods and occasional clustering of ships provided graphic proof of the crisis in the form of large numbers of ships at Durban's outer anchorage. After the Christmas holiday in 1969 there were 16 ships anchored off Durban facing delays of between three and

four days. Shipping congestion was said to be second only to Dar es Salaam on the eastern African seaboard where ships had to wait up to thirteen days for berths in the port. The mass dismissals had been a major setback for productivity. Shipping agents complained that Durban could not handle the tonnage of general cargo passing across its wharves in spite of the fact that there had been no significant increase in tonnage during the past few years.<sup>54</sup> The extent of the crisis faced by capital in steadily decreasing worker output was shown in figures produced in a 'hard-hitting report' publicized by the Natal Mercury.<sup>55</sup> The report produced evidence of an astonishing drop in productivity in general cargo handling which had dropped about 40 per cent in the period 1962-69. In 1962 a gang discharged an average of 11.3 tons in an hour and loaded 12.2 tons in an hour. In 1969, the year of mass dismissals and employment of hundreds of inexperienced workers, these rates dropped to 6.4 tons an hour for discharging and 7.9 tons for loading. The significance of the crisis was not generally apparent to all shipping companies, some felt that the situation in which twenty ships were lying at the outer anchorage waiting to enter the port would be solved in a few weeks, others were pessimistic about the future. Commercial capital's agitation on the reorganization of the harbour abated in the following months, but the congestion in the harbour mounted enormously in the following annual holiday period, Christmas to New Year in 1971. At the beginning of the year there were twenty-two ships lying idle off the Durban port, some of them facing a five day delay in getting a berth. As previously, the crisis produced a series of statistics which were used by commerce to demand drastic reforms by the SARH. It was estimated that the number of general cargo ship days lost each year was growing rapidly from 364 in 1968, to 521 in 1969, and to 1,189 in 1970. The Durban Chamber of Commerce estimated that unless urgent action was taken the figure could exceed 2,000 ship days lost at a cost of R4 million in berthing delays to shipowners, quite apart from other costs. The slowdown in the movement of commodities was extending the

period in which they were locked in the form of commodity-capital, affecting the turnover of capital in shipping but also acting as a brake on the rate of capital accumulation in the South African economy. The crisis caused by declining productivity of stevedoring and railway workers worked its way through the chain of economic relations in a circular way. The shipping companies who claimed they lost up to R2,000 for each day a large freighter lay idle in the anchorage off Durban raised their freight charges to commerce and industry twice towards the end of 1970.<sup>56</sup> The charges to capitalists in South Africa were eventually passed on as rising prices, as inflation gathered momentum in the early 1970s. The rising freight charges raised the spectre of the shipping companies' 'fining' Durban for unreasonable delays by adding a surcharge to freight rates. It was reported that 'international shipping is fed up with the log-jam in Durban' which faced the prospect of having a surcharge slapped on freight rates as on lesser ports such as Beira and Mombasa. In an act of desperation, the SARH attempted unsuccessfully to stop larger tonnages being landed.<sup>57</sup> With world trade entering into the boom of 1970-72 one shipping firm had even faced the Port of London with a 25 per cent surcharge. Stevedoring in South Africa approached this boom in a weak position.

While all sections of capital and the state coalesced to break the dock workers' strike in 1969, the crisis in productivity of the dock workers and rising freight charges forced open divisions and public disunity.<sup>58</sup> With the increasing numbers of ships lying idle off Durban harbour, capitalists involved in transport and commerce, led by the 'vanguard' anonymous shipping agencies, developed a critique of the harbour administration. There were three main elements to the criticism of the SARH: the stevedoring companies themselves were exonerated from criticism because of their ancillary position to the harbour administration and as fellow capitalist enterprises. The main thrust of the criticism was against the 'administrative'

racial job allocation practised by the SARH.<sup>59</sup> 'White job reservation is crippling Durban harbour' was the slogan of the liberal press and shipping companies; the blame for the congestion lay on the shoulders of the SARH which only allowed whites to operate the harbour crane, to drive the fork-lift trucks, to check the cargoes being landed on the wharf, and to supervise the gangs of African workers. White labour was presented as protected, without the spur of unemployment to raise its pace of work, and expensive. Black labour should be employed to do the work more efficiently and cheaply. The issue was presented as political and ideological: the SARH administration being governed by political criteria to maintain an immobile race-grade structure of employment which was causing dock efficiency to decline rapidly under the strain of the white labour shortage. The growing queue of cargo ships off Durban was due not to the slackness on the part of the stevedoring labour units, but to a shortage of white shunters, checkers, crane operators, and fork-lift truck operators. The issue was not a simple one of liberalization of what the capitalists called the 'traditional labour pattern', but also a demand for the employment of labour which could be subjected to the long hours and lower wages than white workers were prepared to accept. Part of the problem of the white labour shortage was that white workers stayed away from harbour employment as it meant they barely saw their wives and children by working fourteen hours a day. Contract workers were separated from their families by long distances and the force of law, and housed in compounds at the port, could adjust more easily to the harsh regime of fourteen hours heavy manual work, limited recreation, and disturbed sleep. Urban African and Indian workers would be attracted to the port to take up operative and clerical work not available elsewhere, at lower wages and without complaining about conditions. In this sense, the liberal demand for an end to job reservation was also one for the employment of workers able to be subjected to higher levels of exploitation as a solution to capital's problems.

The second element of the capitalist critique followed from the first: the SARH was a department of state bound by political considerations and policies and as a state enterprise wholly inefficient. 'Instead of good, red commercial blood pumping through the arteries of the work force, the harbour has to rely on stuffy red Government tape', wrote the Sunday Tribune, advancing the interests of the stevedoring and shipping companies.<sup>60</sup> For the first occasion since the state took over the Durban harbour in 1916, suggestions were made that more of the work in the harbour be handed over to private companies.<sup>61</sup> In the words of a shipping agency: 'If necessary, whole berths in the harbour should be handed over lock, stock and barrel to private stevedoring companies, who are not bedevilled by labour policies and could use non-Whites to operate cranes, fork-lift trucks and move cargo generally. They can also ensure more efficient supervision.'<sup>62</sup> These proposals to de-nationalize the docks demonstrated the increasing confidence of private capital now that the harbour administration faced the enormous problems of getting the overall efficiency of the port improved.

The final issue in the criticism of the harbour administration was that of mechanization. Private capital argued that the SARH had dragged its feet in bringing in advanced cargo-handling equipment on the wharves and that what was introduced was not used to capacity because of the shortage of white labour. The shipping companies appreciated that the SARH had ordered more machinery and fork lift trucks but felt that had been left too late. 'The equipment should have been ordered years ago. If it had been here, there would be no delays in shipping turn-arounds.'<sup>63</sup> Mechanization was seen as a means of advancing black workers into operative work and floating the colour bar upwards to release white workers to fill vacant positions as supervisors, drivers, and tally clerks. The spokesman for Holland Afrika Lines situated the cargo-handling in Durban between two periods. 'The whole pattern is changing from physical handling to

mechanical handling, and we have not yet reached the stage of fully containerized or palletized cargoes.' But urgent action was needed to introduce the appropriate equipment. The whole question of mechanization was closely related to that of the level of productivity of the workers, and the private companies argued that the harbour administration's attempts to mechanize had been hampered by political considerations such as the need to employ whites only as operatives.<sup>64</sup>

The campaign by private companies against the harbour administration was supported by the United Party opposition in parliament. The criticisms were tempered by avoiding censure of the local officials in the Durban port and by keeping the more sharply expressed points anonymous. The railways administration, operating as a public service to the profit-making system by providing transport at the lowest cost, was obviously sensitive to detailed criticism by its partners in the exploitation of the workers. Far from struggling to maintain a rigid racial structuring in the docks, the harbour administration claimed to have moved African workers into all operative work on Maydon Wharf as an 'experiment' and to have allowed other black workers to take up the work of 'shunter's mate', deckhands on harbour craft, and other berthing work.<sup>65</sup> There had been no resistance from the railway worker associations which are forms of white company unions subordinate to the interests of the apartheid state and antagonistic to the interests of the mass of railway workers. The expansion of white employment during the boom of the 1960s had created many other opportunities for white workers and the maintenance of the policy of sheltered employment lost the attraction it held for white workers during the depression. White workers were prepared to allow African workers to move upwards into previously 'white' jobs if this were proved to be in the state's interest, defined in legislation as the provision of cheap transport. The harbour administration had also provided for increased employment of Indians in the docks, initially as a type of secondary 'civilized labour'

policy, but later in clerical work.<sup>66</sup>

The increase in black employment in the harbour was predicated on the implementation of racial wage differentials, an explicit policy of not paying the rate for the job in the interests of keeping black labour cheap. Their conditions of service and wages were considerably worse than those of the stevedoring workers. Unlike the stevedoring companies, the harbour administration did not feel compelled to introduce weekly employment for the wharf workers and the casual labourers employed by the railways earned a daily basic wage of R1.40 in 1969, in comparison with the daily wage of a stevedore set by WD 251 of R1.80.<sup>67</sup> The railway compounds were considerably worse than those of the stevedoring company, although the controls may not have been as rigorous.

The free availability of African labour to the railways and the intense exploitation of its workers<sup>68</sup> did not provide much pressure on the harbour administration to extend facilities and mechanize. Despite a number of investigations into the possibilities and necessity for mechanization, surprisingly little advance was made in the post-war period. The movement of cargo in the docks was an industry which developed plant and equipment sufficient for a certain number of workers, but did not necessarily increase constant capital in the same proportion as employment. By extending working hours<sup>69</sup> and increasing the intensity of work in the early 1960s after the formation of the DSLSC, production had been continued on the basis of absolute surplus value. 'The production of absolute surplus-value turns exclusively on the length of the working day, whereas the production of relative surplus-value completely revolutionizes the technical processes of labour and the groupings into which society is divided.'<sup>70</sup> The record imports in 1965 and 1966 in the Durban harbour were handled by increasing employment and working hours and maintaining the degree of intensity of labour, despite formal agreement in the railway administration since the end of the war that mechanization should be under-

taken. In 1955 the SARH had declared itself 'fully committed to a policy of the highest degree of mechanization of cargo-handling', but the first record of its implementation in 1957-58 was the purchase of only eighteen fork-lift trucks.<sup>71</sup> No further mechanization is recorded in the survey of the port published in 1969, although the large sugar terminal came into operation in 1964.<sup>72</sup> By the late 1960s the dock workers in Durban were handling 59.2 per cent of the cargo and 35 per cent of the shipping with only 33.7 per cent of the capital invested in plant and equipment in South Africa's harbours.<sup>73</sup> The extraordinarily low level of mechanization in Durban, against the declared policy of the SARH, was the result of the extraction of surplus labour from a cheap and efficient labour force. Such high rates of exploitation were possible because of the suppression of the working class organization in the early 1960s and the severity of national oppression. But they also made the harbour administration and stevedoring companies very vulnerable to decreases in the intensity of labour and the cost structure more responsive to increases in wages. In short, the gains made by capital in the early 1960s were being wiped out by the rising level of class struggle in 1969.

The harbour administration was sensitive to the charges made by the private companies led by the Durban Chamber of Commerce, and did not dispute the criticisms. The problems of Durban harbour were presented by the harbour administration as beyond human control. 'We are doing our best. The port is operating at peak capacity and we are doing the maximum. If there are too many ships for the number of berths we have that is for the shipping world to sort out.'<sup>74</sup> When the congestion became critical early in 1971 a deputation from the Chamber of Commerce met the SARH assistant general manager to discuss methods of speeding up the handling rate. In its representations the Chamber asked for African indunas employed by the SARH to be given more authority, as was the case in stevedoring, to release white supervisors for checking duties. The

other issues raised were not mentioned in the public reports but the Chamber must have insisted on more mechanization and 'Africanization'.<sup>75</sup>

Despite criticisms of the SARH being unprepared to make changes in employment, the dual process of increasing cargo-handling equipment and moving white workers out of operative jobs proceeded steadily. Ironically the harbour administration had little difficulty in displacing white workers with black workers at considerably lower rates of pay because the white railway workers' union is tied politically to the apartheid state and is committed to the profitability of the SARH. The harbour administration sought time to introduce the changes by placing a restriction on tonnages landed per ship, to come into operation on 1 April 1971, but these were relaxed after agitation and pressure from shipping companies.<sup>76</sup> The railway administration gradually introduced changes in employment on the dockside by allowing Indian shunters' 'mates' (workers who were employed to do the same work as whites but in a subordinate position at lower wages), by stepping up the purchase of cargo-handling equipment, and then by taking on 130 African fork-lift drivers to work in selected areas. These drivers were first employed at Maydon Wharf and the new pier, and the white operators moved to other areas. The new drivers were given an intensive two-week training program. The harbour administration could be highly selective in recruiting African workers for these 'privileged' jobs and most of the workers had heavy duty or light vehicle driving licences. The African fork-lift drivers were employed at lower wage rates than the whites and the harbour officials refused to provide information on their actual scales. These new harbour workers were said to be proud of their work and the press reports give the impression of the workers' dependency on the harbour administration being considerably more than that of the white workers they replaced. 'They maintain their vehicles with the pride of a new car owner.'<sup>77</sup> The harbour administration selected the workers from within the railway service and said the job was

'jealously-guarded' among the African workers. The Natal System Manager, L.M. Englebrecht, said: 'The Africans have a high aptitude for this type of work; they work hard to keep their jobs and they do the task well.'<sup>78</sup> The harbour employers seemed intent on creating a new grade of African worker: obedient, grateful for the opportunity of doing 'white' work, and independent from the mass of the railway labourers. Following further negotiations with the white railway staff association, an additional 41 Africans began work as fork-lift drivers at the new pier, bringing the total number of African fork-lift drivers to 170.<sup>79</sup>

The insistence of private companies on rapid mechanization in the docks reflected the need for capital to respond to the day-to-day resistance of the workers (declining intensity of work) and strike action. It was not simply the transformation of absolute to relative surplus value, although this was the tendency and ultimate objective of capital. Both the harbour administration and private companies wanted to combine the Africanization of supervision to smooth the flow of production from ship to shore with the faster movement of cargo on the wharf: to combine mechanization with greater economy of labour. The cargo-handling equipment would increase the tendency to organize production around machinery, increasing the subordination of labour to capital, cheapening and increasing production. Each fork-lift truck could be evaluated in terms of the labour-time saved and wages 'freed' by higher productivity. It was the workers' obstinacy to working themselves to the limit which hastened the introduction of machinery. While capital presented the introduction of mechanization as an aspect of 'modernizing' the harbour, an inevitable progression into the modern world, the timing of mechanization in response to the workers' resistance demonstrated that machinery is 'the most powerful weapon for suppressing strikes'.<sup>80</sup> Under capitalism machinery also is a means of driving the workers to greater exertion. In the docks, if the fork-lift trucks could help clear the wharves, the stevedoring workers could be freed to work faster, and the overall efficiency of the port increased.

This partial reorganization of the labour process did not solve all the problems of capital. The increase in the working day which was introduced in the early 1960s managed to clear the harbour of congestion and the transport equipment helped to remove bottlenecks on the wharf, but the fundamental problem remained of increasing the intensity of labour. Work in the harbour did not take the form of an assembly line with the workers under the direct discipline of machinery, and although some modification of supervision over the labourers on the ships and the wharves was made by giving increased powers to the African indunas, productivity remained unacceptably low. The 'slave driving' tactics which characterized white supervision, based on an exercise of social and political power (in short the right to fire, and to call a policeman), was being replaced by more efficient black supervision. Not all white foremen were necessarily slave drivers using racial abuse and assaults as a method of increasing the intensity of labour, and it was counter-productive to capital to have unnecessary fights and minor stoppages through conflict between white and black at work, as long as discipline generally was being maintained.<sup>81</sup> The most efficient white foremen were, moreover, those who did not employ racial oppression in the drive for production: management's ideal being the Zulu and foreign language linguist who got on easily with the labourers and developed a 'special relationship' with the African induna. The white foreman's ideal was possibly (as Zulu Phungula liked to point out) reading the newspaper and letting the workers 'get on with it'; this would mean slack supervision and allowing the workers to set their own pace. The advance of African indunas to the central position of immediate command over the workers would smooth over the problems of language and unproductive antagonism between white foremen and black labourers.<sup>82</sup> With the additional wage differential for senior indunas in stevedoring and the increasingly privileged position of all African indunas in the reorganized labour process, capital would be guaranteed detailed supervision over the labourers and an increase in the rate of exploitation. Expensive supervision would be replaced by cheaper and more

efficient supervision.<sup>83</sup> These adjustments in the labour process permitted the more economical use of labour and were welcomed by the shipping companies, but the problems of output per worker became crucial as a wave of imports swept into South Africa in the early 1970s.

While the decline in productivity of the dock workers precipitated a crisis after the stevedoring strike in 1969, the problem itself was inherent in the solutions capital found to the rising resistance of the workers in the 1950s. While the record cargoes in 1965 and 1966 could be handled on the basis of extensive hours and small amounts of additional labour, by the late 1960s the workers were becoming exhausted and increasingly resistant to the high levels of exploitation. The decline in productivity which resulted counteracted the cheapening of the worker of the earlier period and caused the rate of surplus value to decline even though real wages were not advancing.<sup>84</sup> For capital in the harbour a decisive point was being reached where the extension of the working day and intensification of labour were becoming mutually exclusive so that the lengthening of the working day became compatible only with a lower degree of intensity. A higher degree of intensity could only be achieved with the shortening of the working day.<sup>85</sup> This inevitable conclusion was only forced on the harbour administration and stevedoring companies after the course of further open struggle by the workers against the employers. Capital was to wrestle with the question of raising output under existing conditions before being forced to the reluctant conclusion that the solution lay in shortening the working week.

Before coming to this conclusion, the harbour employers had to struggle with the problem of increasing output before reducing the working week. Rather than employing more workers and inaugurating a two shift system the employers considered an incentive bonus system. Capital was constrained in employing more workers for the following reasons: the value of labour-power had been raised through the decline in productivity, labour-

power was not the cheap commodity of the earlier period, and there was a problem of a shortage of skilled labour. The possibility remained that with a higher level of mechanization and a general 'push' to increase output, the problem of congestion could be solved. The employers immediately ran into problems in changing the form of wages, an unprecedented development in South African harbours. The planned bonus scheme would reward the workers for cargo tonnage in excess of a defined 'normal' tonnage discharge rate which would be based on the previous year's figures. The scheme was negotiated between the railway administration and the Conference Lines, a cartel of shipping companies, and did not directly involve the stevedoring companies. It was planned to improve output by 25 per cent over the 1970 figure, which would be sufficient to clear the backlog of shipping. There were a few concessions in the form of shorter hours; the scheme would give the harbour workers one long week-end a month, and where workers had finished loading or discharging a ship by 5 p.m. they would not be called upon immediately to start work on another ship.<sup>86</sup> This was the scheme in broad outline; by late July it was announced that the new wage system would be introduced within a week, and that there would be a significant rise in wages for workers prepared to work overtime. The shipping companies had been asked by the Railway Administration to work out a table of 'normal' tonnage rates which would apply only to general cargo working and would differ for ships 'in the various trades'. The norm would have to be exceeded for the bonus to be paid. This bonus would be set at R25 for 100 tons, but this figure would only be paid if a ship was discharged in the time allowed based on the fixed normal discharge rate. For example, a ship arriving with 5,000 tons to discharge would pay a collective bonus if work was completed in the allotted time of R1,250, which would then be divided by the Railways between the stevedoring and railway workers. The bonus would be paid by the shipping company and debited to the various ships. 'The bonus money will be well spent if the incentive brings to an end the chronic congestion which has riddled the port for many years, hitting its peak

this year', wrote a local shipping correspondent.<sup>87</sup> Great optimism was shown in the possibilities of speeding up production. In the last two weeks of May 1971 delays which grew to as much as 10 days per ship were eventually reduced to five days through concerted effort, and the employers believed the harbour workers could be considerably more efficient.

The introduction of the incentive bonus scheme was, however, deferred early in August because agreement could not be reached between the harbour administration and the shipping lines. The two main points of disagreement were apparently over the setting of 'normal' tonnage discharge rates to be met by the workers before the bonus became operative, and the fact that at one shed the workers would stand no chance of earning the bonus money. These were the publicly reported differences, privately there were a number of other points not only expressed by the two main protagonists (the harbour administration and shipping lines) but also the stevedoring companies. The most important questions raised by the stevedoring companies were those relating to the possibility of workers gaining control over the pace of work. The whole idea of incentive bonuses and adjustable 'norms' raised the spectre of trade union power; any change in the norms would involve the workers discussing their output. Under trade unionism, Dreyer alleged, the pace was set for the least efficient worker.<sup>88</sup> There was likely to be continual controversy over the norms which could not be guaranteed to be easily understandable; incentive schemes could work in assembly line conditions where quotas could be established through time and motion studies, but not in the harbour. Discussions broke down on this issue, the Conference Lines arguing that the norms laid down by the SARH were too low and would cost them more than the savings they would make by possibly gaining a day at sea. The SARH felt that only the shipping companies would benefit, had problems with their white workers, and eventually a compromise could not be reached. There were numerous

ancillary problems to the difficulty of establishing norms; stevedoring workers moved from ship to ship depending on demand; a ship would start to be unloaded with five gangs and end with two; inferior winches on old ships would penalize some gangs; there were difficulties in estimating precisely how many tons were landed by each gang; and the workers could not calculate their earnings. The difficulties were mainly related to the problems of the stevedoring workers. It would apparently have been easier to operate with the SARH workers who were assigned to particular sheds. There were even doubts among the shipping lines; some were not convinced that a speed up of work beyond the existing rates would not cause a fall of working standards in the rush to reach the norm. During the negotiations over the incentive bonus scheme the stevedoring companies were relegated to the position of junior partners of the shipping lines. Apparently they argued that the time had come to consider whether long working hours were necessary if there were such diminishing returns.

It was reported that most of the dock workers were dropping from fatigue from the pressure under which they had been working since late 1971. Since the beginning of the year there had only been two days on which no general cargo carrying ships had had to wait for berths in the congested harbour. This meant that all workers were having to work overtime for four hours every night. Normally, it was reported, the Christmas rush was cleared by February, but in 1972 there seemed no end to the congestion. Delays could still run at three to four days with more than 12 ships waiting daily for berths. 'The whole problem revolves around labour and until this is rectified congestion will continue', reported a local newspaper.<sup>89</sup>

The contradictory reports on the incentive bonus scheme indicated the urgency on the part of the harbour administration, the uncertainty on the part of the shipping companies, and the general crisis in confidence of dock employers. The shipping companies evidently felt the workers were

capable of producing more under existing arrangements. They feared that the previous year's figures could easily be surpassed and that they would have to pay considerable sums for the increased efficiency of the docks. Although the shipping lines would in effect only be paying what they would otherwise lose in reduced turnover they must have been calculating on the wave of imports coming to an end and did not want to enter into long term contracts which could be to their disadvantage. With the sudden change of plan in August 1971 the question of intensified labour was dropped for the moment by employers and in the lack of any other initiative the long working hours were maintained.

### Agitation and mass strikes

The 1969 strike had set in train responses from a variety of social groups. To the black working class the strike represented a tremendous step forward, despite its suppression. The new determination of the workers to resist the employers and the state was echoed in a number of strikes and bus boycotts. In the reserves the African intelligentsia viewed the independent action of the workers with some unease. In the aftermath of the strike the stevedores had been forced to return to the reserves and the authorities were concerned that the strike could become a struggle against the tribal authorities and strike-breakers in the rural areas.<sup>90</sup> In a more general political sense the strike marked an independent resistance to the apartheid state, and the rural African petty bourgeoisie and chiefs were concerned lest their collaboration with the apartheid state be exposed not only by a vociferous black consciousness youth movement but also by the workers demanding to know why it was that their movement to the towns should now be under the control of the Bantustan officials. Why should the rural African petty bourgeoisie gravitate to the political institutions of the Bantustans when the peasants and workers had struggled against their precursors, the tribal authorities in the 1950s? There was considerable debate about the importance of opposing Bantustans among workers in Natal

in the late 1960s, and the dockers strike could have opened a series of industrial and political struggles beyond the control of the political representatives of the African petty bourgeoisie.<sup>91</sup> The decision of Gatsha Buthelezi to campaign for the acceptance of a territorial authority in the reserves of Natal and Zululand (now termed Kwa Zulu) was an indication of the political leadership's response to the rising resistance to the apartheid state by black workers and youth. With high-flown principles and passionate rhetoric the political representatives claiming to speak for the Zulu nation and the African oppressed grasped the role of collaboration with the apartheid state.

The strike provoked a rather different response from white students who felt that the tactics of open protest against apartheid in education were becoming exhausted and were even becoming ritualized and platitudinous. Rebuffed by black students determined to shake themselves free from the liberal white student movement, the student radicals interpreted the 1969 dock strike as the opening of a mass movement of the black working class which would eventually sweep away the apartheid state. One strike by black workers was felt to be equal to ten student protests, and the strike marked a period in the white student movement of 'turning to the workers' in the search for a vital force against apartheid and the hypocrisy of the liberal bourgeoisie. In the first half of 1971 these student radicals formed a Wages Commission at the University of Natal to conduct research into particular industries, to present evidence to the Wage Board, and to agitate to encourage working class organization and demand higher wages and better working conditions. The student radicals did not arrogate a leadership role to themselves, they saw their work as initiating a movement under the leadership of black workers, by providing information and technical assistance; the black working class was seen to have vast resources of leadership. After an initial stimulus the working class organizations of the past would be reactivated and the past leadership embedded in production would guide the movement in its political orientation.

The Wages Commission prepared information on industrial legislation, trade unions, and works committees. More importantly, it published a newspaper Isisebenzi/Industrial Worker to provide information which workers could use in putting forward demands, to carry strike news, and to discuss the struggles of workers in particular industries. The first issue carried an article on the history of strikes and workers' demands in stevedoring, and news on the strike of abattoir workers demanding the reinstatement of a worker.<sup>92</sup> Subsequent issues would be devoted completely to the stevedoring workers.<sup>93</sup> While some preliminary attempts were made to gather information to provide evidence to the Wage Board to raise the wages of workers at least to the poverty datum line, the publication of the Wage Board's recommendations for unskilled wages in Durban provided the Wage Commission with the opportunity of conducting mass agitation for higher wages in Durban. About 10,000 pamphlets were distributed on 8 June 1971 calling on workers to support the demand for at least R7.97 a week (the current poverty datum line) and to attend a meeting to protest the Wage Board's recommendation for unskilled labour in Durban. More than 400 workers attended the meeting, demanded a minimum wage of R20 a week, and signed a petition protesting against the recommended wages. The following day a strike broke out at a local steel foundry at which the workers used the pamphlets to support their demands for higher wages.<sup>94</sup> In a relatively short period the Wages Commission in Durban had established a method of work in placing demands before the Wage Board in particular industries and conducting effective industrial agitation. Its weakness was a belief in the spontaneous movement of the working class independent of organized leadership, an economistic view of class struggle, and an underdeveloped understanding of the African petty bourgeoisie. These weaknesses were not immediately apparent, however, because of the extraordinary popularity of the wage demands and the warm response of African workers to the newspaper. The agitation of the Wages Commission had a considerable influence not only on the course of struggle in the stevedoring industry but also in the subsequent mass strikes.<sup>95</sup>

The stevedoring workers were obviously not unaware of the increasing number of strikes by African workers in Durban, in particular the McWillaw strike which involved skilled metal workers, and the general demand of the mass meeting in June for R20 a week.<sup>96</sup> In an interview Dreyer blamed the Wages Commission for raising the expectations of Africans irresponsibly and for causing unemployment for the workers who had been misled into taking strike action. He said that he had received assurances from the workers that they would 'cause trouble' with anyone interfering with them as they were aware of the plight of the strikers in 1969. This certainly was not the view of the stevedoring workers who were both aware of the general demands of African workers in Durban and the discussions about the incentive bonus system between the SARH and the shipping companies. Naturally, the proponents of the scheme tried to impress the few workers who were consulted about the great advantages for earnings which could accrue from speeding up production. No doubt the workers discussed the matter at length among themselves. On Thursday, 16 September 1971, six weeks after it had been announced that the incentive bonus scheme would be deferred, a notice in Zulu was posted in the DSLSC compound. The notice was addressed to the senior liaison officer telling him that the workers were not satisfied with their wages and that they wanted an increase by the following Friday. The demand of R14 a week, which could have been eliminated by the suppression of the 1969 strike, was restated. The DSLSC management described this demand as 'vague' but said the position was delicate and that they were anxious to find a quick solution to avoid any strike action.<sup>97</sup> The technique of agitating through pamphlets on the company notice board, which proved so successful in arousing the workers to collective action while safeguarding the leadership, was again being employed. Despite the massive retaliation through dismissals during the 1969 strike, the underground organization of the workers had by no means been eliminated.

Either hardened underground leadership had managed to slip through the screening of those workers who were re-employed, or new leadership was carrying forward the lessons of the immediate past. The DSLSC management was placed in a dilemma: to provide an increase would acknowledge the authenticity of the underground as the voice of the workers, to ignore the pamphlet could lead to another disastrous strike just as congestion was beginning to ease.

By Monday, 20 September 1971, the four stevedoring companies had adopted a 'wait-and-see' approach, although collective action was provisionally planned in response to potential strike action. The strike threat had come at a time when the port was relatively quiet after determined efforts had been made to eliminate delays. But officials were wary in regard to the threatened strike, and one port official said: 'That is all we need now. The harbour is at its quietest in months, but a strike by the stevedores will throw a giant spanner in the works.'<sup>98</sup>

The dock workers, who had received local and international support in the aftermath of the 1969 strike, had support for their demands from the Wages Commission and an offer to mediate from the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA). The Wages Commission issued a statement defending the workers' wage demand for a basic wage of R14, which it said was the same amount asked for in 1969, and there had been a big increase in the cost of living since then. It called on the employers to negotiate with the stevedores with the assistance of an impartial board of inquiry. The danger was that the employers would resort to their strategy in the 1969 strike.

A pattern emerges. Without a negotiation apparatus strikes are bound to occur. Port activities are disrupted. With the standard reaction to strikes from employers, the police are called in, arrests are made and unskilled workers are recruited only to make the same demands at a later date. Should not an impartial inquiry be set up to prevent yet another crisis situation at the docks?<sup>99</sup>

The statement was not so much an attempt to set such an inquiry into motion (it was highly unlikely that the Department of Labour or the employers would tolerate any such move), but to draw off any public support from the DSLSC and indicate support for the workers' demands. Without any specific coordination with the Wages Commission, a local official of TUCSA, which represents the labour aristocracy and reformist industrial unions, offered to mediate between management, officials, and the workers. This offer by the Natal Secretary-Organizer, Jock Espie, was sharply rejected by the Department of Labour. The Department said that TUCSA could deal with Whites, Coloureds and Asiatics, but not with disputes involving African workers. This was disputed by Espie who quoted the Minister of Labour in support of his claim that TUCSA had the right to become involved in representing the interests of African workers during wages negotiations. 'If the stevedores ask for TUCSA's help we will give it to them', he said. 'It is possible that while the stevedore leaders are reluctant to identify themselves to their employers or the Department of Labour they might feel more at ease with a representative of TUCSA'.<sup>100</sup> Not surprisingly this suggestion did not receive a welcome from the DSLSC which could not have wanted a free exchange of views between the workers even with a representative of the labour aristocracy. In particular, any public discussion of the demands of the stevedoring workers would bring out the extraordinarily long hours worked and the question of compulsory overtime.

Before Friday, 24 September 1971, the day the incentive bonus scheme for railway workers was to be introduced, the Assistant Manager, W.S. Dreyer, announced a new set of wage scales for stevedoring which would be introduced from 1 October. He presented the wage increases as being prompted alone by the new wage system of the railways. 'The stevedore companies of Durban employ a parallel labour force and, obviously, if one section working the harbour is to be afforded benefits, then the other

section should receive similar opportunities.' He said that the increases had been under consideration since May and were not the result of the strike threat. The bonus scheme he said was not suitable for stevedoring operations. 'The wage determination applicable to the stevedoring trade is generally accepted by all concerned to form the basis of remuneration for its employees.' But since the existing wage scales had only come into effect during April 1969, the employers felt they could not rightly seek a revision at this stage. He said that too much had been made of the anonymous note pasted on a wall in one of the compounds. 'The system of communication between employees and management is based on custom and common usage. It has not failed because we have received repeated assurances that there is no support for whosoever wrote the note.'<sup>101</sup>

This rather defensive statement tried to obscure the most important issue in the discussion of wages: that the employers had been forced to make a unilateral wage increase independently of the operations of the Wage Board. While the stevedoring companies had always argued they were bound by contractual obligations to the shipping companies not to increase wages unless required to do so through statutory regulation, under pressure from the workers the wage system was made more flexible. Despite the employers' argument, the system of wage determinations which served the interests of the employers and from which the labourers had been excluded in 1969 was not agreed to by the workers; the wage determinations did not provide for an annual increase in wages and were not a product of agreement between workers and employers. The attempt to discredit the underground organization of the workers by arguing it had no support from the workers was unconvincing; it was a similar note in 1969 which had brought out the workers on strike. Far from the relations between workers and employers being one 'communication' through indunas they were based on commands from the employers via the indunas. It was the supervisors whom the management was relying on for reassurance that the underground was unrepresentative. Far from their authority being accepted by the workers,

the relations of domination and exploitation within the DSLSC were to be profoundly shaken by the workers' increasing resistance.

Under the new rates the stevedoring workers received a basic R8.50 a week (an increase of R2.00), winchmen and gangwaymen R9.90 (an increase of R2.30) and the indunas R15 (an increase of R3.40). If a stevedoring labourer worked Monday to Saturday he would receive a total of R3.90 in daily allowances in addition to the R8.50, making R12.40 basic wage a week.<sup>102</sup> The increase in the minimum weekly wage did not bring about rises in the overtime rates, Sunday rates, or cargo allowances, and so constituted the cheapest method of responding to the demand for higher wages. It also meant that the corresponding relative decrease in the 'premium' wage rates in terms of the basic wage was likely to cause further antagonism from the workers. Not being in touch with the workers nor continuing to support their demands, TUCSA welcomed the new wage scales and Espie said he was pleased that a confrontation had been avoided. 'I don't know how the stevedores feel about it but I should imagine they feel as I do that half a loaf is better than no bread at all.'<sup>103</sup> The Wages Commission, looking to the stevedoring workers to provide a lead to other workers, condemned the R2 increase as an answer to the crisis in the docks. 'Until there are legal and effective channels of communication, and a renunciation of force by employers, there will be continuous problems at the docks.' It attacked the employers' projection of the indunas as the 'customary' representatives of the workers.

At the last Wage Board hearing in 1969 the indunas who were present absolutely rejected the representations of the Republic Transport workers who were asking for pay increases. Far from putting forward the workers' demands, the indunas said the workers were happy, and their fathers would decide for them. But when the determination was announced the workers went on strike, and 1,500 were sacked. This shows that the workers rejected the 'customary' representation.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the relatively small increase in wages in comparison to the demand for R14, the workers did not strike on Friday, 24 September. This did not indicate that the underground demands of the workers had been modified by the employers' response, on the contrary. The demands of September 1971 showed that the stevedoring workers had sufficient resilience to recover from the repression of 1969, to make the same demands, and to employ similar tactics.

Although the DSLSC management wanted to present the wage increases as inevitable and in line with the introduction of the incentive scheme for railway workers, the company had never made unilateral wage increases willingly. Almost without exception the company had refused to make wage increases under pressure from the workers, fearing this would open the floodgate of demands. It was certain that the DSLSC would have preferred to have had a further wage investigation by the Wage Board, but officials of the Wage Board had said they were already overloaded with work on hand and that the stevedoring trade which had had a wage investigation 'only' two years previously would have to wait in line.<sup>105</sup> At the time the incentive bonus scheme for harbour workers was dropped (it was apparently revived only for harbour workers possibly on a different basis), there were certainly no definite plans for increasing wages. It seems likely that the stevedoring wage demand stimulated both the SARH and stevedoring companies to reconsider both minimum wages and the incentive scheme as a matter of urgency. Certainly there was no announcement in the press that the SARH would continue with the incentive scheme on its own prior to the wage demand of the stevedoring workers.

The prospect of workers making an independent and decisive forward movement on wages and against the system of cheap labour excited the Wages Commission and even drew on the sympathy of the liberal press. The Wages Commission stepped up production of pamphlets and a workers' news-

paper, while in an attempt to gain credibility as representative of dock workers TUCSA initiated the preliminary steps towards a registered union for Coloured and Indian workers in the docks. In an editorial entitled 'Wage slaves' the Daily News used the occasion of the workers' demands to argue for a narrowing of the black/white wage gap and for wages above the poverty line. It complained that the stevedores were only earning R12.40 for a six day week compared with the R34.40 a week earned by British dockers before overtime and fringe benefits. 'The work may not be strictly comparable but it is hard to justify such a high disparity in unskilled rates', the editor wrote. The lesson for the liberal press was that employers should take action to increase wages and provide training to make the workers more productive.<sup>106</sup> The generosity of the liberal press was very much tied up with that of the liberal bourgeoisie which saw that an increase in wages for African workers would widen the internal market for manufactured goods.

The forward movement of the African workers also made the Indian and Coloured workers employed by stevedoring and shipping companies as drivers and office workers eager to cooperate with the attempt by TUCSA to establish a registered 'coloured' trade union. The strategy of TUCSA was to focus on the organization of white collar workers when the manual workers were taking the lead, trying to manoeuvre within the legislative framework for trade unionism in South Africa. When the attempt to form a trade union was announced the Natal Secretary, Espie, said: 'There is nothing underground about the proposed union. The formation of a union with Asiatics and Coloureds as its members is within the law.'<sup>107</sup> The basic demands of the union were to be a guaranteed minimum wage (the shipping clerks were covered by the Shops and Offices Act which does not regulate wages) and definite payment for overtime and Sunday work.<sup>108</sup> The inaugural meeting was held on 27 November and attended by 200 Coloured and Indian shipping and dockworkers. A working committee of eight

dockworkers representing shipping and stevedoring companies was elected by a reportedly enthusiastic meeting.<sup>109</sup> Subsequent meetings of the working committee decided on the name Shipping Harbour Industrial Personnel Society (SHIPS) and a constitution was drawn up. It was planned to establish the union in Durban and then to recruit members from other ports, from the docks, shipping companies, and SARH. Eventually it was hoped to include seamen on board ships sailing under the South African flag.<sup>110</sup> Despite the evident enthusiasm of the white collar workers for some form of organization, and the careful legalism of TUCSA, the attempt to form SHIPS floundered as a result of the hostility of the employers, the Department of Labour, and interrogations by the Security Branch. The employers and state departments were firmly opposed to having any form of working class organization in the docks, and given the fierce repression of the African workers, it would not be likely they would tolerate organization by other workers. The wide publicity and openness of the TUCSA strategy, an inherent aspect of its reformism which declares 'We have nothing to hide', alerted the forces of repression and worried the white collar workers who were desperately insecure at work and reliant on the benevolence of their employers.<sup>111</sup> Without the endorsement of the majority of the workers in the docks, the African workers, the attempt to form a registered union was likely to be seen as a consolidation of white collar workers against the manual workers. The SHIPS exercise raised the hopes of Indian and Coloured workers in the docks without being able to make an advance. The struggle of all workers in the docks could have made a considerable advance if the better educated workers had been able to combine with the militant labourers, but the whole tendency of registered trade unionism was in the opposite direction.<sup>112</sup> The future demands of the workers for higher wages and improved conditions in opposition to the employers and the apartheid state, were to be made by the labourers.

### Wage demands and organization

In the period after the workers had forced a wage concession from the DSLSC the internal organization of the workers was consolidated and systematic demands made both by workers 'openly' organized and through the underground.<sup>113</sup> The growing organizational strength of the stevedoring workers and the coherence of their demands was a factor in the general movement of the workers towards the end of 1972 which burst into the mass strikes of 1973. While the whole history of the stevedoring workers has been one of forward movement followed by fierce repression, in the early 1970s the workers laid the basis for permanent organization in terms of demands and ideas. In response to the growing determination of the workers, the KwaZulu Bantustan leaders were increasingly uneasy and the DSLSC management drew heavily on the new forms of political authority in the Bantustans for control over the workers. The rising struggle of the workers encouraged in management not the detailed control of the oppressive legislation (although this was capably utilized when needed) but a tendency towards 'autonomous' control over production by the workers.<sup>114</sup> This surprising development was based on greater authority being given to the indunas and the institutionalization of social controls over the pace of production.

The stevedoring workers were eager for contacts outside the workplace and their compounds in the early 1970s. For the first time in the history of stevedoring struggles, the workers away from the Point, those employed by Grindrod and Cotts on Maydon Wharf, came to take a crucial part in organizing the stevedoring workers throughout the harbour. The principal agencies for stimulating the workers' organization in this period were the Wages Commission and the General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund, both of which strengthened the underground organization of the workers. The principal cause of the heightened activity of the workers was the Wage Board investigation which followed the wage increase which the DSLSC had to concede in September 1971.

The Wages Commission gave special attention to propaganda for the stevedoring workers after the September 1971 demands. In an issue of Isisebenzi which followed, an article traced the history of the struggle of the stevedoring workers from the inception of the DSLSC in 1959, discussing how the company had introduced wage differentiation among the workers as a means of maintaining control over all the workers. The 1971 increase in the minimum wage had not affected the 'premium' rates of overtime and Sunday time, and the workers were still being required to work up to 90 hours a week. But despite the oppression of the workers after the 1969 strike, the attention of the world had been drawn to the struggle of the stevedoring workers, and protests had been made to Prime Minister Vorster. The article concluded by arguing for the formation of a trade union which could present the demands of the workers.<sup>115</sup>

Another article, written by A.W.G. Champion, discussed the struggles of the togt workers up to the time of Zulu Phungula. Finally, figures were presented on the wage differences between white and black workers, linking the poverty of African families to high disease rates. This issue was directed primarily at the stevedoring workers and distributed at the Point and a railway station. The Wages Commission was surprised to receive a response from the workers which was obsequious ('We greet you who have been sent by our Lord to enlighten us ... '), but also contained some of the concrete demands of the workers. The letter complained of the danger at work and the fact that the employer fired workers who were injured because they were useless at the job. The tax system was a major grievance: the workers were being compelled to pay tax even though other workers at the same wages did not. When the workers complained about the tax system they were sacked. 'The old system of income tax was better because we paid taxes to the Bantu Affairs Office ourselves, but today's system we don't understand.' Collaborators at work were a stumbling-block. 'The people who talk for us are toadies of the boss and these people give the boss power to play around with us.' The final question was that of those

workers fired during the 1969 strike and specific districts were mentioned; Mahlabathini, Nkandla, Nquthu, Nongoma, Matubatuba, Estcourt, and Ixopo. 'The employers go to the farms to recruit new workers before they have begged the old workers to return to their job, even though they were sacked for absolutely no reason.'<sup>116</sup> This letter was published (without the name of the writer) in the second issue of Isisebenzi, which argued that the monopoly of stevedoring employers in the docks demanded careful organization.

While the open agitation of the Wages Commission established a basis for exchange between the editors and workers, and letters were received regularly, the question of the basis for mass organization was being examined in discussion with officials of the Garment Workers Industrial Union (Natal) and the Furniture Workers Industrial Union (Natal). These two unions, representing basically Indian workers, were led by Harriet Bolton who made available the union hall and facilities. She suggested that a mass workers' organization could be built up by starting a benefit fund which could attract workers to a common organization. Once the basis for association had been established, the question of industrial organization could be discussed in the light of the fear of the workers of police and employer repression. The garment union would provide a loan to establish the benefit fund which should eventually be registered in terms of the Friendly Societies Act. After discussion with African workers in the garment and furniture industry it was decided that the benefit fund should provide death benefits for the workers and their families. The General Factory Workers Benefit Fund, established in June 1972 was the first attempt after the mobilization of workers under SACTU in the 1950s and early 1960s to build up mass organization of workers.<sup>117</sup> The GFWBF almost immediately drew thousands of workers, and a special effort was made to recruit stevedoring workers from the Point and Maydon Wharf (the latter being geographically closer to the offices).<sup>118</sup> The immediate

strategy of the Wages Commission and the GFWBF was to help to organize works committees of members in the factories and to get these registered in industrial law to provide some form of protection for the workers' leaders.

The early attempts at developing workers' organization within each company and more broadly within an industry posed enormous problems. The agitation of the Wages Commission was immensely popular among the workers and each issue of Isisebenzi disappeared within minutes (usually before the police arrived), and often workers who had received earlier copies complained when the current issue had run out.<sup>119</sup> Complaints such as these exposed not only the immediate problems of distribution but also the direction of agitation — whether it should be general and possibly diffuse, or aimed at leading industrial groups such as the dock and abattoir workers which had taken the lead in strike action. The question was one of ideology and strategy. The Wages Commission felt that at best it could have an 'enabling' function, establishing a vehicle through which the underground workers' voice could be heard. At a future date it was considered that politically conscious workers, such as the thousands of workers who had been members of SACTU unions, would take over the editorial functions and the Wages Commission's work would then become technical: reduced to research and printing.<sup>120</sup> Under the dominance of the black consciousness critique of white student action, the Wages Commission did not seriously engage in a study of revolutionary underground organization linked to trade unionism. The Marxist ideas which were presented in Isisebenzi, those of surplus value and unpaid labour, were only related to trade unions which were seen as the 'biggest weapon' to advance the workers.<sup>121</sup> The struggle of the workers was presented as one for 'a fair share of what they make' and for a living wage. As the possibility of establishing close relations with African workers increased, the need for a workers' newspaper was seen by leading members of the Wages Commission to be less urgent than the immediate organizational tasks. With every advance in organization

there was a corresponding decrease in public agitation as the members of the Wages Commission took up the work of building the GFWBF. As the members learned the lessons of semi-secret organization in relation to groups of militant workers to avoid bringing the forces of repression on their own heads and to safeguard leading workers in the factories, the general agitation seemed less important than the painstaking and time-consuming work of developing contacts, studying wage agreements, and trying to understand the welter of complaints and grievances put forward by the workers.<sup>122</sup> Articles putting forward the demands of workers with whom the Wages Commission was in touch were thought to endanger these workers by drawing the attention of employers and the police to militant groups of workers. Not having an understanding of the political aspirations of the working class and the need to build the underground political organization of the workers as well as the semi-legal groupings in the GFWBF, the Wages Commission tended to dissolve with the growth of mass membership.<sup>123</sup>

The struggle for higher wages and organization in stevedoring brought out both the strengths and weaknesses of the Wages Commission's approach to agitation and organization. The loose contacts which the Wages Commission established through the early editions of Isisebenzi were immensely strengthened by the wage investigation into stevedoring conducted by the Wage Board in the wake of the concessions forced from the DSLSC in September 1971. The wage investigation gave the Wages Commission the opportunity of publicizing the wage sitting widely and transforming the wage investigation into one of the most decisive confrontations ever experienced by the Wage Board between workers and the employers and state officials. By championing the demands of the stevedoring workers, the Wages Commission laid the basis for the initiation of independent organization of workers in one of the most repressive areas of employment in South Africa. The advances were, however, made at a

high cost to advanced workers, particularly those employed by the DSLSC, and the victories of the workers in open confrontation with the employers were not able to be repeated. Without exaggeration it could be claimed that the impressive demonstration of solidarity by the stevedoring workers at the wage sitting, which was repeated by workers in Cape Town, was instrumental in changing legislation to ensure that such confrontations were not to be repeated in the future. The increased activity by the stevedoring workers had important political implications for the African petty bourgeoisie. In particular those sections taking up the leadership of the KwaZulu Bantustan were posed with the contradiction between their collaboration and the independent organization of the workers.

The investigation of the Wage Board into the stevedoring trade in July 1972 gave an immediate impetus for a campaign on the wages of the workers. The Wages Commission produced a special edition of Isisebenzi which gave publicity to the specific time and place of the Wage Board sitting and encouraged the workers to make the strongest representations. The newspaper pointed out that the employers would be claiming that the indunas would be speaking for the workers and that the workers should reject their ingratiating appeals and make their own demands. The workers were informed of a method of presenting demands based on their needs in the form of budgets, and the demand was made that the hours of work should be reduced from 56 to 40 a week.<sup>124</sup> The conditions of the stevedores should be at least brought up to the minimum standards of the Factories Act.<sup>125</sup> The Natal Branch of TUCSA, which had attempted to organize a registered union for Indian and Coloured dock workers, supported the demand to end poverty wages. 'If the recommendations of the Wage Board are not above the nationally agreed poverty datum line', said Espie, the organizing secretary of the Natal branch, 'then it will seem to be Government policy to keep workers on starvation levels'.<sup>126</sup> On this occasion the registered trade unions represented by TUCSA, particularly the local official of the

National Distributive Workers Union, gave support to the demands to double the wages of the stevedoring labourers.

The workers received copies of the special edition of Isisebenzi enthusiastically. At the Grindrod premises at Maydon Wharf members of the Wages Commission were taken around the buildings by the workers. On the day of the wage sitting, 17 July 1972, the Wages Commission received a letter from the workers which spelt out the concrete demands of the workers and rejected any representations apart from those of the labourers. The 16 points contained in the letter were systematically developed and constituted the fundamental demands of the stevedoring workers in the forthcoming period. The letter, which appeared to come from the writers of the pamphlets in 1969 and 1971, complained that the workers had been instructed by their employers not to attend the sitting.<sup>127</sup> The DSLSC management had told the workers that they would select some people to represent the workers at the meeting. 'The problem is we do not know these people and also we don't know whether those people will be like those who stood for us in 1969.' The demands were firmly located in the labourers with a strong accent on the right of manual and productive workers to higher wages. The 'customary' representation of the indunas was repudiated, the labourers having the right to put forward demands on behalf of all the workers because of the lead they had taken in strike action and the losses they had suffered.

In all strikes which we have had here not a single induna was chased away. How many people were chased away from work in 1969 in connection with strikes for money? Among those people who were chased away how many indunas were there? Why do the bosses give enough money to those people who said they were satisfied with the amount which we earn?

All the demands for increases made at strikes come from people who are working very hard and who are not satisfied with the money which we earn. The indunas just laugh at us and say you are playing if you ask for higher wages because the money

we earn is enough. When the manager called them and asked about the wages we earn they said clearly they were satisfied. The question is this: Why do the bosses give them higher wages when they said they were satisfied?<sup>128</sup>

In the letter highly specific demands were made around the basic wage demand of R18 basic wage and 50 cents per hour overtime.<sup>129</sup> The other important demands were a night shift allowance, better food during the night shift ('even the prisoners don't eat this food'), an annual bonus, and for damaged helmets to be replaced by the employers.

Despite the DSLSC management's refusal to allow those employed on 17 July to appear at the Wage Board sitting, more than 200 stevedores crammed into the small hall in the Department of Labour building used for the hearing. The partitions between two rooms had to be removed to allow all the workers to hear the proceedings and the employers and state officials shifted uncomfortably as the crowd of workers pressed against their seats around the U-shaped tables.<sup>130</sup> The large number of workers who arrived at the Wage Board sitting could be attributed not only to the information carried by Isisebenzi (many workers openly displayed their copies), but also to the fact that the writers of the letter had agreed that there should be independent representation of the workers by those not at work that day.<sup>131</sup> The hearing opened with a short statement from the Wage Board Chairman, H.W. Tindale, who appealed to those who wanted to speak to be brief. He granted permission to the Bantu liaison officer of the DSLSC, J.B. Buthelezi, who was described as the leader of the stevedoring workers, to put the case for the workers.<sup>132</sup> Buthelezi opened his address with the claim that the works committee (himself and the indunas beside him) represented the workers and that they had a good relationship with their employer. He asked for a general increase in wages without specifying a demand, leaving that for the Wage Board to make a reasonable decision, and proposed other minor improvements in conditions. He was interrupted in his

delivery by a representative of the Wages Commission who suggested that the proceedings should be translated so the large numbers of workers who had come to make representations could follow the arguments. This was reluctantly conceded by the Wage Board Chairman, and an independent part-time court translator brought to the hearing by the Wages Commission was permitted to go ahead. Buthelezi then appealed to the students' representatives and those he described as outside the industry not to interfere in the representations to the Wage Board or to 'raise unfounded hopes' among the workers. He argued that they, the works committee, and their employers were the parties primarily concerned with the investigation and knew best the conditions of the industry. He reminded 'well intentioned persons' of how similar minded people in 1969 had lost the jobs of 900 workers but had not brought about any improvement in conditions. He pointed out the copies of Isisebenzi which he said were circulating among 'uneducated and ignorant workers' and which would lead the workers to believe there would be results far beyond what could be achieved. 'We don't appreciate going behind doors', he said and asked the Wages Commission to leave the workers alone; they were quite able to look after themselves. In a most important remark which gave an insight into his political position he said: 'If we are fighting a losing battle, we will refer these matters to our own governments.' The pamphlets which were being distributed, he argued, should be sent to the Minister of Justice for him to take action. If the people who wrote them wished to apply their energies in a good cause he suggested they should turn their attention to the unemployed and 'get them something to eat', rather than misleading those already in employment and robbing them of their jobs, as had occurred in 1969.<sup>133</sup>

Buthelezi was speaking not only on behalf of the 'works committee' of selected indunas keenly defending their position, but also as a leading representative of the Bantu Labour Regional Committee, charged in terms of the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953 of representing the workers and setting disputes under the direction of the Department of Labour.<sup>134</sup>

The employers said his request for an upward adjustment to basic wages and overtime, and a special allowance for workers handling poisonous loads was justified.

His vigorous denunciation of the Wages Commission and attacks on the labourers caused rising resentment and frequent interjections from the workers. 'Who is this man, who elected him to represent us?' they asked. Others attacked Buthelezi for sitting in an office and not dirtying his hands by working on the ships. The employers were alarmed with these attacks on 'their' African representative and Dreyer demanded that the Chairman call on workers who spoke to identify themselves. This suggestion caused an uproar, and the Wages Commission spokesperson accused the employers of trying to victimize the workers who addressed the Wage Board. The Chairman appealed for calm on two occasions and asked the employers not to victimize workers who had made representations; he also said he and other officials had a plane to catch and the representations should be shortened. Under these constraints the workers were allowed to speak.

The TUCSA representative, Espie, argued that the workers should earn at least the poverty datum line. 'This allows a person to live and nothing more. It is better to starve and not to work, than work and starve. These people are on starvation wages. They should get no less than R18 a week. It is not enough, but we will accept that.' The workers argued they had families in the reserves who were starving, they had put their case time and again to the employers, but had only met with repression and dismissals. All the workers who spoke rejected completely the 'works committee' and demanded it should stop claiming to represent them. When the director of the Natal Employers' Association, L.D. Thorne, said there was no reason for increasing 'what are already good and fair wages' and that each African family had more than one work, he was

shouted down by the workers. In contradiction to the employers' claim that the workers had the 'advantage' of being housed in compounds and did not have to meet housing and transport costs, a worker stood up and displayed his railway season ticket. The Wages Commission presented a memorandum to the Wage Board which contained a translation of the letter received from the workers and demanded R18 a week basic wage, overtime at a rate of time-and-a-half, Sunday time at double the daily rate, an annual bonus, that the workers be free not to work on Saturday, and that all overtime should be voluntary. The memorandum called for an end to the recruitment of workers from remote rural areas and to migrant labour generally: wages should be raised to a level which would allow the workers' households to live in urban conditions. It also pointed out that stevedoring was highly profitable and the employers quite able to meet the increased wage costs. In response to the bitter attack on the Wages Commission by Buthelezi and the Natal Employers' Association, the spokesperson, Halton Cheadle, referred to the memorandum and the lack of democratic representation of the workers: 'This memorandum represents only part of our evidence. The rest lies there', he said, pointing to the workers packing the hall. He accused the Wage Board of not publicizing wage investigations.<sup>135</sup> The hearing was dominated by the destructive presence of J. B. Buthelezi and the Wage Board's supposed questions of time; the workers, for whom this sitting was one of the few opportunities for discussing their wages in a place outside the control of the employers, were only allowed brief interventions at the end of the sitting by an increasingly impatient Wage Board. The officials of the Wage Board made no attempt to convince the workers of their impartiality, despite the juridical aura which the officials cultivated. At the end of the hearing the Chairman said: 'We will do the best we can. We hope you won't be disappointed'. This statement indicated that the demand for R18 was not likely to be met, a position which was reinforced when he said that the wage of the stevedores was higher than wages in other industries and that the picture painted of

poverty and starvation was not as desperate as some people claimed.<sup>136</sup> As has been argued in the discussion of the activity of the Wage Board in the 1960s, its prime function was to modify the wage system in the interests of the employers, to even out the wage increases conceded by some employers throughout the trade, rather than to act as an independent and authoritative state institution. As all state institutions in capitalist society, it served to reconcile the class interests of the workers to the overwhelming dominance of the social power of capital; the forthright repudiation of the claims of the workers by the Wage Board Chairman reflected his class position as a state official.

Despite the commanding position granted to J.B. Buthelezi at the hearing which put the workers and the Wages Commission on a defensive footing, having to argue against the employers in a setting in which the force of state repression was being evoked, the workers were in a buoyant mood. They felt that Buthelezi had exposed himself as an agent of both the employers and the state, and a comradely relationship developed between the burly and self-confident workers and the radical students. On the way out of the Department of Labour buildings one of the workers reassured the Wages Commission that they had made a tremendous step forward: 'J.B. won't see Christmas'. The problems of transforming this enthusiasm and determination into semi-legal or underground class organization in the savagely repressive regime as maintained at the docks remained a fundamental problem for the officials of the GFWBF.<sup>137</sup> Communication between the officials and workers was difficult as few of the workers spoke English and few of the officials Zulu. Any discussion about organization immediately after the hearing was limited by the presence of state officials and probably the Security Branch: open discussion between the white students and black workers on the pavements would have attracted the police's attention. Quite apart from the workers' caution in having discussions with a relatively unknown and untried social group, the workers

had different levels of consciousness and differing strategies for organizing under highly repressive conditions. For some workers the strategy was a simple one of 'getting rid' of the person who personified the oppression of the DSLSC, J. B. Buthelezi, and this did not necessarily imply long-term organization and universally agreed demands. For others, possibly more cautious at the initial stages, J. B. Buthelezi's dictatorship rested on the power of the DSLSC and the state over the expenditure of their labour power. For these workers secret but large-scale organization was essential for any of the demands of the workers to be met. The differing tendencies among the workers took time to be appreciated and understood, especially after the elation of a successful manipulation of the procedures of the state.

Employers throughout Durban were disturbed by the wage hearing being transformed into a mass meeting; it gave the workers the opportunity of placing demands before the employers and the Wage Board which were not likely to be met (the R18 demand constituted an increase of 118 per cent over existing wages), and being able to hold the threat of strike action over the heads of both. A similar strategy conducted by the Wages Commission in conjunction with advanced workers in an industry being investigated by the Wage Board could have the same results and create a groundswell of working class action. The Natal Employers Association, of which the DSLSC was a leading member, was most alert to these possibilities and felt the Wage Board hearing had been turned into a demonstration against existing legislation which did not allow African workers to organize freely. The Director, L. D. Thorne, was concerned that the strategy of the Wages Commission which had been used in the investigation into the cement products industry in June 1971, and the next public hearing which was on the stevedoring trade, would be repeated in the future. In his words, this would cause 'the uninitiated worker to believe that results will accrue that cannot in fact occur', and the interests of the African worker would be damaged.

The (Wage) Act permits only interested parties to take part in such investigations and it may well be that the Board will be forced to apply this strictly in future if such liberties are to be taken with its procedures; certainly no useful work could be undertaken in the detailed examination of a wage determination in such an atmosphere. <sup>138</sup>

Like the other employers present at the wage hearing, Thorne had been shaken by the determination of the workers to more than double their wages and the vehemence with which they had rejected the authority of black company officials and the arguments of the employers. As an employer his first response was to limit, control, and repress, the forthright articulation of the workers' demands. For the stevedoring employers, as for the NEA director, the lesson of the hearing was a simple one: there were to be no more public hearings conducted by the Wage Board into the wages and conditions of workers in stevedoring. <sup>139</sup>

#### Bantustans and 'responsible autonomy'

The question of the form of control of the workers by the stevedoring employers after the 1969 strike was raised acutely by the growing power of an African official within the DSLSC: J.B. Buthelezi. From one perspective the advance of an African person into a commanding position of management in a company indicated a general movement away from racism towards a managerial view of the necessary upward mobility of African workers and an end to the colour bar in industry. African workers would be promoted to those jobs for which they had a particular aptitude and would become part of a management team and not just 'window dressing'. The growing authority of black officials and the indunas in the DSLSC was not simply a superficial change in the appearance of authority in the company, it is argued, but a response to the crisis of productivity in the docks and to the workers' struggle. African supervision was both more effective and cheaper, deepened the division of labour, and secured a loyal section of the work force during strikes. With the acceptance of the Bantustan policy

by the chiefs and sections of the African petty bourgeoisie, however, the rural links of the workers became both more important ideologically and politically. The DSLSC which recruited selectively from particular reserves, and which encouraged its indunas to select workers for their gangs, was bound to establish reciprocal relationships with chiefs and Bantustan bureaucrats. It was this policy which attracted favourable comment from an anthropologist studying migrant workers in Durban.<sup>140</sup> Sacks interviewed the stevedoring workers employed by DSLSC, and wrote approvingly of the 'ethnic' managerial policies. An anthropology graduate was in charge of the compounds and white officials spoke African languages. Dreyer supplemented his anthropological knowledge with an understanding of industrial legislation, and wages and working conditions were centrally controlled. Because management recruited workers from certain districts only and selected the indunas and clerical staff carefully it was 'at all times aware of what is going on among its employees'.

The stevedores who were interviewed ... showed a high degree of commitment to their employer. Many pointed out that they had more than doubled the wages they earned at their previous jobs; others liked the many opportunities for overtime that existed at the time of the research; nearly all thought that the system whereby they were paid a guaranteed wage whether there was work available or not, was most fair; and several men said that it was important to have White managers who understood their customs.<sup>141</sup>

Management was said to grant workers who wanted to make ancestral sacrifices leave without question. In the company, Sacks wrote, he found none of the inter-racial tension that was prevalent in the SARH because the workers were 'largely self-supervised'. These idyllic conditions carried out by 'an exceptionally benevolent and considerate' employer encouraged the recruitment of abakhaya (men from the same home district) which then worked together under an induna likely to come from the same district.<sup>142</sup> 'In general, indunas are most likely to supervise their abakhaya.'<sup>143</sup> The arbitrary power of the indunas was said to be limited by the attitude of

fellow abakhaya and by the holding of 'kangaroo courts' before which an induna could be required to appear. This court would be composed of the liaison officer, J.B. Buthelezi, the compound indunas of the parties concerned, the respective witnesses, and, as in a traditional indaba, an interested audience. A court procedure would be followed with participants being able to make remarks and interjections. 'Thus all indunas are immediately subject to the disciplinary sanction of public opinion in such a court.'<sup>144</sup> Sacks reported that he had heard of indunas being so ridiculed by such courts as to ask for demotion or having to resign. The indunas then had to rely on social rather than formal authority in keeping up the pace of work, they had to have the 'aptitude for controlling their fellow workers' and an 'ability to win and maintain the respect of the men they control'.<sup>145</sup> Following the analogy used by Sacks: Dreyer was the chairman of the school board, Buthelezi the headmaster, and the indunas the prefects. The system described is a far cry from the democratic control of the workers over the indunas, as the judges were the senior black compound officials and even the 'ship' indunas were not involved in deciding on discipline of their own grade, but it did indicate a certain devolution of power from management to Buthelezi. The recruitment of workers from selected areas plus a measure of 'self-supervision' was an attempt to fuse the notion of an induna as a commander in the Zulu army with that of being the sergeant-major of capital commanding the labour-power of the workers. Sacks presents the supervision of the workers by the indunas as completely unproblematical because of the ethnic and political policies of the DSLSC.

The Company's indunas ... seem to fill most of the traditional roles of 'tribal' indunas: they represent large bodies of men, some of whom are kin, from particular areas; their roles are ascribed: they are the 'mouthpieces' of the economic authority that organizes the men's economic activities just as the 'traditional' chief used to; finally, like the 'tribal' or 'traditional' induna, they have their own particular friends, interests and loyalties, but these did not detract unduly from the popular acceptance of their circumscribed powers.<sup>146</sup>

Such an analysis is taken at the level of appearances: ideologically management and the senior officials present the black supervisors as having the traditional mystique of Zulu military grandeur; in practice the black supervisors are engaged in the service of the employers in extracting the most unpaid labour from the workers. Despite this material relationship with their employers, the powers of the black supervisors were limited not by kangaroo courts, or even by 'ethnic' bonds, but by the solidarity of the workers in production. The growth of class consciousness and independent action by the labourers necessarily involved a rejection of Zulu militarism, which would constitute a barrier with workers from other backgrounds and reinforce the rule of the black supervisors, and the development of new forms of association and ideology. The advances made by the stevedoring workers in developing underground organization, new strategies for resistance under the most vicious repression, and by taking strike action in the face of armed police, were testimony to the growth in consciousness of the workers under the harsh discipline of capitalist production. It was precisely these advances which forced management to depend more resolutely on African officials such as Buthelezi and to encourage a degree of autonomy to the black supervisors.<sup>147</sup> Far from limiting the power of the indunas, the 'kangaroo courts' built the authority of the 'judge', J.B. Buthelezi, and confirmed his rule both over the workers and any recalcitrant indunas.

These modifications in the rule of capital over the workers were hardly typical of companies in Durban or elsewhere (although similar strategies are possibly adopted by capital in mining) and completely bemused Sacks, who contrasted this 'benevolence' with the ruthless dictatorship over the workers exercised by the SARH.<sup>148</sup> This approach does not comprehend that all sections of capital, including state enterprise, are united in the pursuit of the most rapid rate of accumulation and that the exploitation of workers by each section merely follows different forms of domination by

capital. Both the stevedoring companies and the SARH are united in moving cargo at the lowest cost to capital as a whole; genuine differences in approach to the workers are based only on calculations of the most effective methods of exploitation. The form of rule of capital in the DSLSC, expressed through the growing power of Buthelezi, was a product both of the overwhelming dependence of management on the direct labour of the workers (rather than its augmentation through the accumulated labour of the past — mechanization) and was a response to the struggle of the workers and the level of class struggle in apartheid society as a whole.

The firm resolution of the workers to continue the strike in 1969 to the point of mass dismissal not only resulted in a disorganization of production (to which the management put a brave face and brought in short-term scab labour) but also confused the recruiting relationships which had been developed over the 1960s. Obviously, management was not forthcoming over the precise re-arrangements which were in the wake of the strike, but one over-riding principle was observed. No workers who had participated in the strike were to be re-employed. The victimization of the strikers thus extended from the docks to the countryside, and the confrontations between victimized workers and those hurriedly being engaged at the newly constituted tribal labour bureaux can be imagined. The situation was complicated by the large number of workers who were on leave at the time of the strike and who may well have had close affinity to those victimized and even worked in the same gangs.

The growing importance of the reserves to the DSLSC in reorganizing production took place at a time when the Kwa Zulu Bantustan was being consolidated. The question of accepting this form of political control was highly controversial to the workers and the remnants of the peasantry in the Natal and Zululand reserves, and the acceptance of Bantu authorities by the Paramount Chief by no means settled the issue. The debate raised

arguments about the benefits of collaboration (e.g. the increased state expenditure which would follow) or the most appropriate form of resistance to overthrow the entire system of apartheid. During these debates the position adopted by Chief Albert Luthuli, the banned President of the African National Congress, was discussed as well as the need for resistance to counter the attraction of the chiefs and sections of the African petty bourgeoisie of the Bantustan scheme. Armed guerillas of the African National Congress (ANC) moved into the countryside and attempted to set up training camps to establish bases for armed resistance. One group approached Chief Gatsha Buthelezi for his cooperation in training the youth in the techniques of armed struggle. All apparently were rounded up by the Security Branch and eleven guerillas and Dorothy Nyembe, a leader of the ANC, were brought to trial in Pietermaritzburg early in 1969 charged in terms of the Terrorism Act and the Suppression of Communism Act. Gatsha Buthelezi gave evidence against the accused who were convicted and given long prison sentences. The episode indicated the intensity with which politically advanced African people resisted the approach of the Bantustan scheme in the Natal and Zululand reserves.<sup>149</sup> Once the opposition of the people to the Bantustans had been overcome, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was elected as the Chief Executive Officer on 9 June 1970. He promised the Minister of Bantu Administration his full cooperation in implementing the Bantu authorities and called for the policy of separate development to be made to work as soon as possible.<sup>150</sup> The chiefs were particularly enthusiastic about the formation of a KwaZulu Bantustan. Their position was consolidated by an expansion of office buildings and a petty bureaucracy to implement the decisions of the territorial authority and more importantly to build the tribal labour bureaux which served as a major source of income for the chiefs.<sup>151</sup> Many chiefs made use of their increased authority to impose arbitrary taxes on the people. In one case a chief called on his migrant worker 'subjects' to pay R2 whenever he felt it necessary in lieu of the labour in his fields he was traditionally entitled to; the money going

on whisky, improvements to his house, or on a new car once every three years or so.<sup>152</sup> Similar allegations of extravagant expenditure were made about Gatsha Buthelezi, although strongly denied.<sup>153</sup> Whether through statutory or corrupt means the growth of the KwaZulu Bantustan entailed increased taxation and suffering for the workers and peasants, and a rapid acceleration of class formation in the reserves. With the granting of 'citizenship' of KwaZulu in 1970 to Zulu-speaking people, an additional tax of R3 per head was imposed for the 'development' of the people.<sup>154</sup> While at the outset the ideology of the KwaZulu leadership was one of tribal solidarity, with its growing aspirations nationally and internationally, leaders such as Gatsha Buthelezi presented themselves as authentic black nationalists and the true representatives of the oppressed black masses. Their nationalism was an attempt to overcome the glaring class contradictions between their collaboration and accumulation and the increasing misery of the African working people.<sup>155</sup>

With the growth of Bantustans throughout South Africa, both the apartheid state and employers looked to the Bantustan leadership for a repudiation of armed struggle and the political control over its citizenry: the African working class. The DSLSC in particular was looking to the Bantustan authorities to provide the kinds of social and political controls which would bring the devastating strikes such as 1969 to an end. The relationship with the reserves, which formerly was predominantly economic (the areas most likely to provide the right type and sufficient supply of labour), was becoming politicized.<sup>156</sup> A mutual relationship developed between the chiefs and bureaucrats in the reserves confronted with the daily demand of workers for jobs at the tribal labour bureaux, and the companies concerned with employing contract labour. This point could possibly be over-developed, as the most advanced sections of capital were looking to more sophisticated social controls, but for labour-intensive sectors, such as stevedoring, mining, construction and agriculture, these

new relationships with the reserves were important. For the DSLSC, re-organizing labour supplies in the post-strike situation, the political relationship with the Bantustans was crucial.

After the 1969 strike the DSLSC made some significant changes in the areas from which it drew its labour supplies.

Table 7.3

<u>Sources of labour supply, DSLSC</u>			
<u>Magisterial district</u>	<u>Percentage of total employment</u>		
	1970	1972	Change
Nongoma	13.6	17.2	+3.6
Nkandla	10.7	9.2	-1.5
Mount Ayliff	10.1	6.7	-3.4
Matatuba	8.7	4.4	-4.3
Melmoth	8.2	8.8	+0.6
Bizana	8.0	7.1	-0.9
Tabankulu	7.9	7.4	-0.5
Estcourt	6.5	1.6	-4.9
Ixopo	4.1	3.0	-1.1
Kranskop	3.9	1.8	-2.1
Nqutu	2.6	1.4	-1.2
Mtshunzini	2.0	1.9	-0.1
Flagstaff	1.9	1.1	-0.8
Camperdown	1.3	1.0	-0.3
Umbumbulu	1.0	1.2	+0.2
Mahlabathini	0.0	16.6	+16.6
Other districts	9.4	9.6	+0.2
	99.9	100.0	

Source: Interview with Dreyer in 1970 and Sacks, II, Table 1. The figures refer to January 1970 and 16 May 1972.

Note: The districts are ranked according to their importance in 1970 but dropping the relatively insignificant districts not mentioned in Sacks, II, Table 1.

The figures which are presented here refer to the post-strike period (starting nine months after the strike) and do not measure the transformation which must have taken place as a means of both breaking the strike and providing a short-term reconstruction of the labour force. But they do indicate highly significant changes as management attempted to lay the basis for a stable labour force in the future. There are, however, some clues to the districts which suffered most from the victimization of strikers in 1969. Employers appear to have a typology of areas and ethnic groups in mind when recruiting or dismissing workers.<sup>157</sup> Workers from Mthunzini were regarded as undesirable, in the words of one employer: 'A man who recruits there must be mad. They are lazy, poor workers, thieves, and are often absent on Mondays, or after Public Holidays.' For reasons which are not immediately apparent, these workers have a higher degree of resistance to employers and stronger class consciousness. Sacks reports that the DSLSC experienced 'considerable unrest' from these 'spirited and independent' workers, and the majority were dismissed. The DSLSC decided never to recruit in that area again.<sup>158</sup> Other districts may also have been subject to a 'black list' depending on the workers' independence from traditional authority and bourgeois ideology. Conversely, the DSLSC would seek out the areas from which management would calculate the workers would be capable, sturdy and docile.

The figures show a continued and increased dependence on workers from districts most remote from the towns and a more 'Zulu' emphasis, with a decline in workers from the Transkei and an increase in those from KwaZulu. The most remarkable increase in employment is from workers from Mahlabathini followed by Nongoma.<sup>159</sup> The areas from which most of the workers are recruited are 'all places of great historical importance in the development of the Zulu, and where the past constantly makes its presence felt'.<sup>160</sup> These areas are the 'heartlands' in the formation of the Zulu people from smaller tribes, the places where Chaka fought his rivals and gained ascendancy,

and where kings were buried. The workers recruited from these areas were basically traditionalists in religion and poorly educated, 'the man for the job' in terms of the stevedoring employers.<sup>161</sup> About 70 per cent of the workers employed by the DSLSC are illiterate, and the proportions are likely to be higher in the case of workers from the heartlands of KwaZulu.<sup>162</sup> These areas were those where a sense of Zulu 'national' pride and the great military tradition were strongest, and the tribal system maintained some vitality. Workers from these areas were likely to give some traditional ideological content to the workplace 'induna', to accept a militaristic discipline, and to have most faith in the KwaZulu Bantustan. Drawing on labour from these areas was not totally without its contradictions for the employers, but these were seen as secondary to the primary advantages of political control by the chiefs and collaborating petty bourgeoisie, and the continuing importance of a homestead subsidy to wages. The possible disadvantages to employers were the use of Zulu 'national' pride in resisting imperialism in great military confrontations against their conditions of exploitation, and the underdevelopment of bourgeois ideology in the form of Christianity. As has been argued, however, the heroic military resistance to imperialism of the Zulu people was an ambiguous legacy for the struggle of African workers, Pondo, Hlubi, Sotho, Xesibe and Bhaca, in the stevedoring trade. It provided a focus for resistance to the racial form of capitalist rule, but also made the workers more susceptible to the sergeant-majors of capital: the indunas. It also could not serve as a basis for class organization with other African workers from peoples who had been subjected to Zulu military domination. There was a sense in which Zulu workers would object to their gross exploitation because of their pride in their historical greatness, but resistance on this basis could only strengthen possible antagonism from other workers.<sup>163</sup> As one of the older workers told Sacks: 'Before we fought you Whites; now we fight our pride. Both battles are, however, for our families.'<sup>164</sup> Armed resistance to white domination is now taking place on a national basis, Zulu pride being

an obstacle to the unity of the oppressed, particularly its leading force, the black working class. The lack of enthusiasm of the people in the Zulu heartland for Christianity is possibly more significant. Conversion to Christianity has been one of the most significant cultural features in the proletarianisation of African workers, revolutionizing consumption and ensuring the ideological subordination of African workers to the capitalist system. In whatever denominational form, including the independent African churches, Christianity has served to adjust African workers to their exploitation as contract workers in single sex compounds by stressing moral fortitude and an 'other-worldly' viewpoint. While Christianity has stressed obedience to authority 'in this world', the traditionalists have maintained a view of filial piety — loyalty and reverence for the homestead.<sup>165</sup> Traditionalists or atheists have not had to undergo the moral anguish over the use of force in resistance to the apartheid state.

With the growth of the KwaZulu Bantustan and its leadership, the reserves increased in political significance as a whole, but each district faced the pressing demands of the workers. As the workers queued outside the newly constituted tribal labour bureaux waiting for the recruiters, the local pressures on the leadership must have been intense. These were the difficulties faced at an early stage in the development of the Bantustan by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi in Mahlabatini, the Paramount Chief in Nongoma, and Barney Dladla in the Estcourt district. The increased number of workers employed from the heartland by the DSLSC relieved some of the pressure on the leaders in Mahlabatini and Nongoma, but not in Estcourt where employment fell rapidly between 1970 and 1972. With the ascendancy of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to the political leadership of KwaZulu it is remarkable that from no workers employed in 1970 there was an increase to 426 from Mahlabathini in May 1972. This period also marked the growth in power in the DSLSC of J.B. Buthelezi, the paternal uncle of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi.

It is not possible to trace the precise relationship between the political authorities in Mahlabathini and the DSLSC. It was unlikely there were no workers from Mahlabathini employed by the company before the 1969 strike, it could even have been that these workers took a leading part in that struggle.<sup>166</sup> What is certain is that prior to the establishment of the KwaZulu territorial authority there were no workers employed from that area, and after Chief Buthelezi's election as Chief Executive Officer there was a sudden increase in employment. Whatever the specific terms of the relationship, the general question which is raised by the relief of the pressure of unemployed workers on the tribal labour bureaux in Mahlabathini, is the political control over a large section of the DSLSC workers. If, as Sacks argues, workers were recruited on a basis of abakhaya and controlled by indunas from their home districts, the growth of the KwaZulu Bantustan brought the DSLSC workers more closely under the control of the chiefs and petty bureaucracy of the tribal labour bureaux.

As a member of the African petty bourgeoisie which voiced public opposition to the apartheid state while implementing its policies, J. B. Buthelezi wavered between articulating some of the demands of the workers, and acting as the executor of the policies of a company privileged to recruit north of the Tugela. In his letter to the Wages Commission he employed the ingratiating and obsequious manner of the African petty bourgeois while also documenting the demands of the workers for the re-employment of the workers victimized in 1969. Before the Wage Board sitting he had rejected his potential role as an intermediary between the workers and the Wages Commission. With the continued agitation of the Wages Commission, and in the face of the rising demands of the workers, he took on an increasingly repressive role. At all times, however, there was no question of his independence either from the determined exploitation of the workers or the oppression of the workers and impoverished peasantry in the countryside.

## Notes to Chapter 7

1. Gervasi (1970): para 3
2. Ibid.: para 178. The theory of the ultra-cheapness and ultra-exploitation of African labour as a result of the forced labour system is most thoroughly developed in the context of the gold mining industry by Johnstone (1976).
3. This summary of the elements of compulsion in the African worker/ employer contract derived from Luke Malaba, May 1978, Trends in Supply, Control and Organization of African Labour in Rhodesia, 1930-1970, University of Warwick: 32-33, is one of the most developed presentations of the compulsion in contracts of employment under national oppression. It takes account of the material inequalities of the employee and employer and the statutory controls over African workers as a whole.
4. Marx (I): 382
5. Ibid.: 874
6. Stuart (1770) quoted by Marx (I), 1976: 801
7. 'The South African Bantustan Programme: Its Domestic and International Implications', Unit on Apartheid, November 1975, p.3
8. One of the first tasks of each territorial authority was to vote salary increases for representatives and chiefs. Wage increases for workers employed by these authorities on any significant scale were rejected. (See Transkei Legislative Assembly debates.)
9. Between these years the food index had increased by 15.7 per cent and wages by 1.1 per cent.
10. Natal Regional Survey (1969): 83
11. Notes on communication (1969): 1. The tradition the dock workers had built was rather different: one of militancy and class consciousness.
12. Dreyer, the Assistant Manager, kept the following books on his shelves: Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand, and Zulu History; Davidson, Old Africa Rediscovered; Krige, The Social System of the Zulu; Englebrect, The Korana. His ideological orientation was shown by his other choice of titles: Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged, and Soviet Strategy in a Nuclear Age.
13. For a full discussion of the many taxes to which Africans are liable, see Race Relations News, August 1978.

14. Daily News, 4 and 9 January 1962. Officials of SACTU supported the workers' demands after the strike had broken out. The workers were eventually acquitted after being defended by R.I. Arenstein, a leading left-wing lawyer.
15. Daily News, 10 February, 14 March, and 29 August 1966. The workers were charged with having taken strike action and only after lengthy court proceedings was their appeal against conviction and sentence of R25 imposed by a Durban Magistrate successful. The state's response in both strikes which were followed by prosecution demonstrated a determination to punish severely any instances of working class activity against employers.
16. The recommendation was published in Government Notice No 2030 on 8 November 1968.
17. The tax system was a classical example of racial discrimination with African workers allowed no rebates and the threshold of taxation beginning at a lower level than whites. A refusal to pay tax made the workers liable to a fine of R400 or 6 months imprisonment, or both. SRR 1969: 156-158
18. In discussions on this topic Dreyer accepted the facts as set out in the pamphlets. He explained that the African clerks at the Bantu Commissioner's Office calculated that the stevedoring labourer earned roughly between R600-670 per annum. Apparently from calculations R14 per week came to be regarded as the threshold for income tax for stevedoring workers. The tax officials obviously set the threshold figure as low as possible to reap the greatest revenue.
19. These details have been assembled from interviews with Dreyer, 1970-72. There were obviously many other important developments before the publication of WD 308 and the Security Branch can not have been idle. What was striking is the extent to which the necessarily small scale of agitation in the two pamphlets both gripped the attention of the workers and forced management into unprecedented concern. It was also a reflection on the disorganization of the resistance movement that no pamphlets had been produced calling on all African workers to resist the new tax system.
20. The Government Gazette is in fact dated 3 April 1969, and the wage determination was to come into operation officially on 23 April 1969.
21. Daily News, 5 April 1969.
22. In bourgeois democracies obviously the police try to appear as impartial upholders of the law, independent of the interests of the employers in strikes and disputes, and concerned only to avoid damage to property and not property relations. In South Africa, given the national oppression of the black masses, such a separation was not thought to be

necessary, and during times of crisis the social and political powers coalesce. The rising level of strike action has, however, raised the need for the police to appear as a distinct and separate power independent from the maintenance of the cheap labour system (cf. statements of the police during the Durban strikes). A contradictory state policy had resulted in both an expansion of the space of civil society (as penal sanctions in employment contracts have been eased) and an increase in the terroristic powers of the police.

23. Sunday Tribune, 6 April 1969
24. The strike was illegal in terms of at least two laws: the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953, and the Bantu Labour Act of 1964, as labour was withheld and demands made by the workers. The picket mounted by the workers on Saturday morning would also be illegal in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act. The workers were unimpressed by arguments that they should obey these laws.
25. Dreyer in an interview in 1970 said this was the response of the workers to Jackson's speech; by this they meant they had no further use for the DSLSC.
26. The Natal Mercury (7 April 1969) used the term "being paid off", the Daily News (7 April 1969) "dismissed", the DSLSC officials prefer to argue that the workers "resigned". The difference is not simply terminological, employers often argue that during strikes the workers "dismiss themselves" — the employers being the reasonable party.
27. Sunday Tribune, 6 April 1969
28. Daily News, 7 April 1969, and Natal Mercury, 8 April 1969
29. The press gave no information on the wages paid to those workers replacing the strikers, although obviously they must have been higher than the daily wages set in WD 308 to attract urban workers even for short periods. The Bantu labour regulations of 1968 required employers to observe strict rules in recruitment but the mobilization of the strike breakers indicated a general free-for-all.
30. Natal Mercury, 9 April 1969
31. ibid., 7 April, 1969
32. These comments were made in the context of a review of Alex Hepple's pamphlet Workers under apartheid. African Communist, Third Quarter 1969, (38): 82
33. An editorial in the Daily News, 7 April 1969, expressed surprise and shock at the demand to more than double the wages of the labourers. 'Perhaps if they had framed their request more modestly, there would have been room for negotiation'. This editorial did not mention the workers' demand for changes in taxation and thus separated the economic content of the workers' demands from the political.

34. The quote is from 'The revolutionary way out', a document of the South African Communist Party published in 1963. Contained in African Communists Speak, 1970, Nauka Publishing House: Moscow.
35. The question of the relationship of industrial to the revolutionary demands of the working class as a whole is one which demands further examination than here: it obviously is intricately bound up with the strategy of resistance to the apartheid state, but the issue is also one of the forms of class consciousness under national oppression. Do African workers possess a consciousness of themselves as crane drivers, weavers, machine operators, and drivers of combine harvesters as well as a common consciousness as an exploited and oppressed African working class? An important thread in this thesis is that the migrant and contract labour system has not prevented the formation of class consciousness at all levels: occupational, industrial, and international.
36. Interview with Dreyer, 1970.
37. Interestingly the press did not publish any information about the pamphlets or the workers' resistance to the Bantu Taxation Act; the data presented here comes from interviews with Dreyer in 1970 and subsequent interviews with DSLSC workers.
38. Natal Mercury, 8 and 9 April 1969
39. Daily News, 7 April 1969
40. Natal Mercury, 9 April 1969
41. The rather wild theorizing of management faced by united working class resistance shows the weakness of managerial science and ideology. While many of the employers' statements may be dismissed as ideological justification for their oppressive action against the strikers, they also indicate the limit to bourgeois social science in dealing with the inevitability of class struggle under capitalism.
42. During an interview in 1972 Dreyer acknowledged there were files of allegations made by the labourers against the corruption of the hiring policies of the indunas. Each white foreman was apparently provided with a number of employment tickets and could determine the quota of workers to be taken on by the indunas.
43. Daily News, 14 April 1969, Key workers should be organized; 15 April 1969, Meaning of the 'S.A. way of life'; 17 April 1969, 'Fighting for rights'; 24 April 1969, 'Employers blamed for dispute on stevedores' pay'.
44. SACP, 'The revolutionary way out', African Communists Speak, 1970, Nauka Publishing House: Moscow

45. In 1972 Dreyer said that the plight of the workers who were summarily dismissed in 1969 'makes me cry at night'; a constant theme in subsequent strikes was the demand for them to be reinstated.
46. A scientific assessment of the efficiency of the port and the productivity of the workers would have to be based on quantitative statistics on the tonnage landed and loaded per hour, but it was not in the interests of the stevedoring companies of the SARH to release this information. Even the Chamber of Commerce which led much of the agitation about the inefficiency of the port refused to disclose data on rates of handling cargo to the author. The Natal Regional Survey (1969) which had the full confidence of the SARH and stevedoring companies did not discuss the issue of declining productivity apart from a short statement on page 121. It presents no statistics on the question. As in the case of most academic research in South Africa the burning questions are more likely to be posed in the bourgeois press reflecting the contradictions of capital rather than in polite academic papers: the forced removal of Africans in the countryside may be found in the press but not in a single anthropological, ethnographical, or sociological work.
47. Marx, II, (1974): 253. The movement of commodities through transport is, of course, to be distinguished from the circulation of commodities in terms of ownership which may not involve the movement of those commodities.
48. *ibid.*: 254
49. Daily News, 7 April 1969
50. ibid.: 8 and 9 April 1969
51. The question of the indunas having the right to choose their own teams was obviously at this point purely hypothetical; they would simply have to take on the workers who were available.
52. Interview with Dreyer, 1970. At this time the company was assessed at a rate of R3.20 for every R100 paid in wages, a considerable sum of money for a company whose main cost was wages.
53. There are certain specialized agencies which do not employ workers from either the DSLSC or Grindrod, like the manganese ore terminal, but these employ relatively insignificant numbers of workers.
54. Daily News, 23 January 1970. One shipping company had nine arrivals with an average delay of three days a ship. In effect this meant that one ship was unemployed for almost a month costing the company in losses about R40,500.
55. Natal Mercury, 23 January 1970. The agency producing the report is not disclosed (it was probably a shipping company), neither is the institution to whom it was addressed (definitely the SARH). The

report apparently gave comparative figures of discharging and loading rates for the previous eight years.

56. Sunday Tribune, 24 January 1971. The readiness of the shipping companies to raise their rates and pass on rising costs to their customers can be contrasted with the attempt of the stevedoring companies to present their cargo handling tariffs as rigidly inflexible when faced with demands for increased wages.
57. Natal Mercury, 20 May 1971
58. The openness of the public debate in a sector of the economy regarded as strategic was compelled by the depth of the crisis. Public antagonism between private companies and the SARH showed that the Harbour Advisory Board was failing to resolve the struggle between representatives.
59. The word 'administrative' is used to describe job reservation in the SARH to distinguish its employment policies from those of unorganized industry which operates a 'conventional' colour bar and industries in which explicit job reservation determinations are laid down. The SARH has persistently maintained a political relationship with white workers, providing them with protective employment and securing their dependence on the capitalist state and antagonism to the interests of the mass of SARH workers.
60. Sunday Tribune, 24 January 1971
61. Unlike other ports, Durban's handling and shipping was in private hands until September 1916 (Natal Regional Survey, 1969: 105).
62. Sunday Tribune, 24 January 1971. With the introduction of containerization in later years a larger role for private companies in moving cargo both in the harbour and inland was sought by the SARH.
63. Natal Mercury, 20 May 1971
64. The Ministry of Transport was not insensitive to criticisms in this area and an official said that changes were being made within the necessary spatial separation of workers. 'You can't have a Black crane driver there and a White crane driver here.' Sunday Tribune, 24 January 1971.
65. Natal Regional Survey (1969): 82
66. Ibid. In the late 1950s and early 1960s there had been a regional campaign to provide jobs for unemployed Indian workers (the question of the enormous numbers of African unemployed at the time was ignored). In 1968 the Minister of Indian Affairs, Senator A.E. Trollip, promised an Indian social worker that jobs for about 500 Indian labourers would

be made available in the Durban harbour. Racial welfare policies of this kind were guaranteed to build antagonism to Indian workers from both African and white workers. Daily News, 17 February 1968

67. Natal Regional Survey (1969): 82
68. The railway workers had all the disadvantages of the stevedoring workers, such as the prolonged hours, without the advantages: e.g. some sort of explicit contract and a guaranteed wage.
69. The railways were excluded from the Factories Act and could extend the hours of work at the will of its management. In the immediate post-war period the hours of work were 60 a week. The question of the hours worked is, of course, not determined merely by the legal maximum of 'ordinary' time. The working week is made up of ordinary hours, night shifts, overtime, Sunday time and emergency work.
70. Marx, I, (1976): 645
71. Natal Regional Survey (1969): 45
72. *ibid.*: 44
73. *do.*: 98
74. A.C. Allen, Assistant System Manager of Railways, quoted in Sunday Tribune, 24 January 1971.
75. *ibid.*
76. Natal Mercury, 20 May 1971. Imports into Durban accelerated rapidly in 1971, rising by more than 50 per cent 'in the past few months'.
77. Daily News, 15 September 1971. Many of the white fork-lift drivers were casuals filling in time while looking for other work. It was mostly the single white workers who stuck to the job, as married men were not prepared to maintain the long hours worked. Personal communication.
78. Daily News, 8 July 1971
79. *ibid.*: 15 September 1971
80. The analysis of mechanization is derived from Marx, I, (1976): 562-566
81. Management notes (1966), I: 7. The task of management was seen as follows: 'to use every opportunity to remove pin-pricks, to act immediately where incidents occur which lead to strained relationships (abusive language, assaults) and constant guidance in matters relating to personal relations in the job situation'.

82. This is not to imply that African indunas could speak all the languages of the workers (Zulu speaking indunas would not be likely to speak Sesuto), or that under African indunas the workers were automatically freed from abuse and assaults. The workers' response to these changes are not recorded; studies of African workers' attitudes to supervisors (van der Horst, 1964 ) show their consciousness not to be dominated by racial categories, even on the issue of supervision which is obviously connected to the general relations of subordination in society.
83. The employers' power over the indunas was considerably greater than over white foremen who were employed directly by stevedoring companies and not by the DSLSC and were in short supply.
84. Marx discusses the relationship of productivity of labour to the rate of surplus value in Chapter 24, 'The transformation of surplus-value into capital', Section 4. He distinguishes between the productivity of labour and the rate of exploitation, the two only being equal where wages are equal to the value of labour-power. See particularly I (1976): 753, and 956-959.
85. Marx, I, (1976): 533
86. This was in a sense a concession to the workers' demand that overtime should be voluntary, although they also made the specific demand that they should not be required to work two ships in a single day. Daily News, 1 June 1971 and WBR (1972): para 88
87. Daily News, 27 July 1971
88. Interview in 1972. Dreyer was not necessarily thinking that the incentive scheme would immediately bring open trade unions into being, what he was concerned about was organic solidarity being cemented in the gangs and the immense possibility for restricted output. He was quite familiar with academic work on industrial psychology which discussed the formation of small groups in the labour process and workers' control over output.
89. Daily News, 5 August 1971
90. *ibid.*, 9 April 1969. The likelihood of clashes in the reserves would be increased by the concentration of dock workers recruited from particular reserves.
91. Taxation of African workers to contribute even further to the construction of the Bantustan was stepped up in terms of Proclamations of the Bantu Homelands — Constitution Act of 1971. In KwaZulu the tax is R3.00 per annum paid directly to the Homeland government by males and females over 18 years old. RRN, August 1978: 2

92. Isisebenzi, 1, c. October 1971
93. ibid., 5, c. 10 July 1972, and 6, c. August 1972
94. At the McWillaw Iron and Steel Foundry 200 African workers came out on strike demanding higher wages. From news reports it appears that all the workers were fired by the employer while 70 police armed with batons stood by. Subsequently, most of the workers were rehired and the leaders of the strike sacked. Natal Mercury, 10 June 1971; Daily News, 10 June 1971; Natal Mercury, 11 June 1971; 16 June 1971; Daily News, 17 June 1971. The Department of Labour was reportedly furious that some registered trade union leaders were at the protest meeting and had associated themselves with the workers' demands. Private information.
95. Sacks, II, presents an anthropological study of the stevedoring workers which concentrates on kinship networks as a basis for association among workers and tribal politics as an explanation of strike action. He does not even mention the Wage Board investigations and the Wages Commission agitation, although it is hard to imagine he was unaware of either. The 'blind-spots' in his work are thus not empirical, but ideological and political. His thesis is critical of the SARH but a major apologia for the DSLSC and its view that the stevedoring workers are basically tribally and 'home' orientated and that cultural and ethnic rather than material factors explain strike activity. His work will be referred to both for its wealth of statistical information on SARH and stevedoring workers and for a most developed view of compound life as encompassed within 'total institutions'.
96. A notice of the meeting was published in Ilanga lase Natal, and both the meeting and the McWillaw strike received wide publicity. Dreyer was well aware of the strike which caused a flurry of activity in the Department of Labour, Security Police, and employers' organizations. In 1966 McWillaws received publicity as a company providing key semi-skilled jobs for Africans at good wages, in response to criticisms of the cheap labour policy overseas. See Natal Mercury, 6 January 1966
97. Daily News, 18 September 1971. Quite why the DSLSC management was prepared to have this information published in the local press is not clear, possibly there were differences between the shipping and stevedoring companies about the way to respond.
98. Natal Mercury, 20 September 1971
99. Daily News, 22 September 1971
100. Natal Mercury, 21 September 1971. Such a level of public involvement in a dispute affecting African workers was unprecedented in TUCSA's dubious relationship with the organization of African

workers, and support for Espie's statement from the General Secretary was doubtful. Although formally committed to 'organizing the unorganized', TUCSA officials were extremely cautious to avoid giving support to striking workers, and were embarrassed that Espie had attended the mass meeting in June. Espie's actions were partly personal (he had a clear memory of the gross exploitation of dockers in his native Glasgow) and partly in response to the rising tide of criticism being made by African workers of registered trade unions.

101. Daily News, 22 September 1971
102. *ibid.* The percentage increases were 30.8, 30.3 and 29.3 respectively; an indication of a slight tendency to narrow differentials.
103. Throughout the dispute TUCSA officials made no attempt to get in contact with the workers. The TUCSA local committee elected a trade union official to the Harbour Advisory Board and he would have had some legal authority to meet the workers openly. The problem was not spatial (the compounds were just down the road) but tactical and political. Following a reformist policy which included appeals to the state to change legislation, and denouncing communism and the campaigns of support for the liberation struggle, TUCSA officials were unwilling to support workers under the guillotine of repression.
104. Daily News, 24 September 1971. The statement also pointed out the anomalies of increasing basic wages without altering the 'premium' wage rates. At this stage the Wages Commission had very limited contact with the stevedoring workers.
105. Unlike other wage determinations, those applied to stevedoring do not provide for annual increments. The reasoning of the Wage Board in recommending annual increments seems to be to phase in wage increases without increasing unduly the wage costs of industries. The stevedoring employers possibly felt it would be better to have a single jump in wages rather than small annual increases which would be liable to be rejected by the workers.
106. Daily News, 23 September 1971. The radical tone of this newspaper did not, however, carry through to criticism of the wages of workers employed in the large monopolies. In 1972, the Textile Workers Industrial Union conducted research into the appalling wages to textile workers employed by the monopoly Frame Group. The editor refused to publish this information for fear of legal action being taken. This information only became available to the public and other workers when mass strikes swept through Durban.
107. Natal Mercury, 15 November 1971
108. Daily News, 15 November 1971. Clerical workers were not covered by the wage determinations.

109. Natal Mercury, 29 November 1971.
110. Daily News, 8 February 1972.
111. The shipping and stevedoring companies provided an expansion of employment for well educated Indian workers in particular, not all of whom had working class solidarity as the guiding principle in their life. Many of the Indian workers who drove trucks into the rural areas during the 1969 strike to recruit scab labour were nervous about their position both in relation to their employers and the African workers. J.N. Reddy, leader of the South African Indian Council and a leading banker, started his career as a shipping clerk.
112. White collar workers could, for instance, have provided the manual workers with details of management plans, assisted in producing workers' publications, and acted as the 'clerical' component of a trade union. As in other capitalist countries there is an acute social disparity between white collar and manual workers in South Africa, African clerks displaying as little enthusiasm for the organization and struggles of manual workers as do Indian and Coloured workers. Despite the distance in consciousness between clerks and labourers, there is not much difference in wages.
113. The word 'openly' is used cautiously here to distinguish between the meetings of workers held under the auspices of the General Factory Workers Benefit Fund to which all stevedores were admitted, and the secret underground organization of the workers with which the GFWBF officials were loosely in touch but which maintained a separate and closed network.
114. Cf. Andy Friedman, 1977, Responsible autonomy versus direct control over the labour process, Capital and Class, 1, 43-57.
115. Isisebenzi, 1, Ubunzima bezisebenzi (circa October 1971). The level of consciousness of the Wages Commission was shown by the inclusion of the article by Champion. Ignorant of his anti-Indian racism in the 1949 riots and his strike-breaking appeals during the 1958 stay-at-home, he was approached as a former leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU).
116. This letter was published in a rather poor English translation in Bulletin, 1, 6 December 1971, and was written by J. B. Buthelezi. The term 'farm' is often used by African workers in Natal to refer to their homesteads in the reserves, and not capitalist farms.
117. In Johannesburg at the same time efforts were being made to revive the decaying industrial unions which survived their abandonment by TUCSA in 1969 under the Urban Training Project. The benefit fund aimed, however, at being a national workers' benefit fund, cutting across industrial divisions which would displace grossly exploitative insurance schemes run by Homes Trust.

118. The GFWBF's rapid growth soon constituted a problem for organization; the members came from a wide variety of industries and factories, many joining as individuals rather than representatives of the workers. The problems of the GFWBF will not be discussed, however, except in relation to the organization of stevedoring workers.
119. The problems in producing Isisebenzi itself were immense, each article had to be written, rewritten, translated into Zulu, and printed. The operation depended on a dominant left faction in the Students' Union which met the costs.
120. At one stage approaches were made to the student leaders of SASO (South African Students Organization) to collaborate in producing Isisebenzi. They were critical of the Wages Commission calling a mass meeting of workers to protest against the unskilled wage determination and rejected any organized cooperation with white students. SASO was at this time more geared to cultural projects and theatre which attracted the black petty bourgeoisie and white students!
121. The Wages Commission considered translating Marx's Wage Labour and Capital but thought it too abstract for the majority of workers in Durban who were not literate even in Zulu. Some of its ideas were incorporated in the article, Yini imhlangano yezisebenzi? (What are trade unions?) in Isisebenzi, 2.
122. Coming from bourgeois families, members of the Wages Commission were able to grasp the resistance of black workers to racial oppression quite readily, demands on issues such as pensions and sick benefits they found difficult to grasp.
123. The history of the Wages Commission movement is traced in the Schibusch Commission, agents of which stole the letters, Bulletins, and other documents of the University of Natal Commission which were carelessly kept at the Students Union. It is not known how many workers who wrote letters to the Wages Commission were endangered by this lack of foresight.
124. Isisebenzi, 5, c. 10 July 1972. The workers' ordinary working hours would total 56 if the compulsory Sunday work was included. Not having had discussions with the stevedoring workers, the Wages Commission was diffident about putting forward the R20 wage demand of the June 1971 meeting.
125. The conditions of service, apart from those areas covered by the wage determination, were considerably inferior to those of the Factories Act. The working week was two hours longer, and the control over accident reporting, and other issues, considerably more lax.
126. Natal Mercury, 15 July 1972. The question of SHIPS was not mentioned in the TUCSA statements before or during the wage investigation, and Espie did not make any demands on behalf of white collar workers who were expressly excluded from the wage determination.

127. The Wage Act of 1957 specifically grants workers the right to appear before a Wage Board and protects workers from victimization for exercising this right. In practice, these clauses are ignored by the employers and there have been no prosecutions for employers victimizing workers in terms of the Wages Act.
128. The quote is a slightly reworked version of a poor translation made in a hurry before the Wage Board sitting in the afternoon. The term 'chased away' is used by African workers in English as a direct translation of the Zulu term 'to dismiss'.
129. Workers accepted that the R0.75 daily allowance be continued.
130. The Wage Board tried to reproduce the atmosphere of a court: the Wage Board officials seated at a raised dais, the 'works committee', CBLB and employers on their left, the registered trade unions and workers who managed to get a seat on their right. All those seated at the table were required to sign an attendance register. The Chairman of the Wage Board attempted to create an atmosphere of judicial impartiality.
131. Point 10 of the letter. The stevedoring trade is one of the few industries in South Africa which could 'allow' a number of workers to be present at a wage hearing without being absent from work. Most of the leading workers with whom the GFWBF officials were later in touch were not able to be present.
132. The obvious anomaly between the letter he wrote to the Wages Commission and the part J.B. Buthelezi was to take in the repression of workers' resistance will be dealt with comprehensively later.
133. The Wages Commission was, of course, not in existence in 1969. What Buthelezi was denouncing was the underground organization of the workers. In relation to unemployment, shorter hours would have increased employment in the docks.
134. Horrell (1969): 132. These regional committees apparently only came into existence when workers took strike action. They were composed of African petty bourgeois: religious leaders, 'liaison officers' such as Buthelezi, and retired headmasters. While some adopted a sympathetic posture to the workers (possibly because they had to justify this form of collaboration), others such as traders were eager to denounce the idea of trade unions. Drum, 9 June 1973.
135. The full account of the wage hearing which is presented here is drawn from notes made and supplemented by newspaper reports: Daily News, 18 July 1972 and Natal Mercury, 18 July 1972. The Natal Mercury fallaciously claimed that the demand of R18 would have cost the stevedoring companies R55 million, a more likely amount based on the approximately 3,000 stevedoring workers in Durban would be R1.5

million! R55 million was considerably more than the entire turnover of the stevedoring trade, and this inflated figure was probably published to demonstrate the ludicrousness of the workers' demands.

136. Natal Mercury, 18 July 1972
137. At this stage the leading members of the Wages Commission were virtually synonymous with the voluntary organizers of the GFWBF. As the GFWBF gained increasing support among the workers, the Wages Commission members devoted more time to building this organization through the support of workers who had been attracted to the Wages Commission through the newspaper: particularly the abattoir and dock workers.
138. Bulletin No 342, Natal Employers' Association, August 1972. The NEA is the most repressive but intelligent employers' organization in Durban. Its representations carried considerable weight with the Department of Labour from the time of its initiation in response to the strike wave in 1942. See evidence of the NEA to the Industrial Legislation Commission of Enquiry for confirmation of the deference with which state officials approached its leaders.
139. It is a matter for debate whether the amendment in 1973 to the Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Act of 1953, which permitted employers unilaterally to lay down wages through their employers organization in any industry for African workers, resulted from wage hearings such as the one on stevedoring or was a general response by employers to the crisis in wages after the mass strikes of 1973.
140. Sack, 1, 1976
141. *ibid.*: 121-122
142. *do.*: 96. Sack simply ascribes all workers from the same districts as abakhaya; his discussion of these groups in the DSLSC compound approaches an ideal type formulation. Despite this criticism it is likely that workers from the same district did associate at work and in the compound, although any level of industrial organization and strike action would demand different forms of association and solidarity.
143. *do.*: 62. Data is not presented to support this argument and at most this 'closed' relationship between supervised and supervisors is a tendency and not a law. It is highly unlikely that the right number of abakhaya were always available to each gang; workers are regularly going on leave and new workers arriving.
144. *do.*: 63fn
145. *do.*: 61
146. *do.*: 62-63

147. It is obvious that the collective punishment of black supervisors by the workers which broke management's ultimate control over production would not be tolerated in the slightest. Any 'disciplining' of a particular induna would be conducted on the basis of reinforcing the justice of their rule over the workers.
148. He writes that the DSLSC was 'more humane' than the SARH and management more interested in the welfare of the workers. Sack, I, 1976: 35. See Dorcas Good and Michael Williams, 1976, *South Africa: The Crisis in Britain and the Apartheid Economy, Anti-Apartheid Movement*, pp. 5-7, for a refutation of the "enlightened employer" argument.
149. There is a short description of these events in *Survey of Race Relations*, 1969: 64. The trial was given widespread publicity in the local bourgeois press and Buthelezi's evidence was received with great hostility by all who gave loyalty to the ANC. There was a resurgence of open ANC activity after the death of Chief Albert Luthuli, the President of the ANC, at Groutville in Natal. The funeral was marked by a display of ANC colours and uniforms by a contingent at the graveside. In the following weeks women of the ANC mounted a vigil outside the Beatrice Street YMCA in Durban.
150. *Survey of Race Relations*, 1970: 142
151. The opportunities for graft and corruption at the local level were immense. In the experience of the writer, African workers paid fees at these labour bureaux for the 'right' to come to the towns, their passes stamped with 'X labour bureaux', and the words 'Permission to proceed to Durban to seek employment granted'. These endorsements were completely valueless and the workers summarily deported from the towns.
152. Sack, I, 1976: 230fn. The 'going rate' for a bribe for a KwaZulu chief in the early 1970s was said to be a bottle of brandy and R5; Sacks, 161
153. Buthelezi strongly defended his generous salary in the Daily News, 18 September 1973, and Natal Mercury, 23 May 1972.
154. Race Relations News, August 1978
155. In an attempt to revive Zulu traditions and military history, the 24th September was declared 'King Chaka Day'. *Survey of Race Relations*, 1972: 183.
156. In an interview with Dreyer in 1972 he questioned the writer about his attitude to the KwaZulu authority and in particular about Gatsha Buthelezi; the political developments in the reserves were mentioned on more than one occasion. Dreyer implied that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi was an immature politician and had a lot of lessons to learn.

The writer put this statement down to his racism and support for the apartheid state. The significance of this statement was not realized by the writer at the time. The reserves have always had an enormous significance on the particular form of the rule of capital over labour in South Africa; the relationship developed in Wolpe's "Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa", develops the economic argument of homestead production subsidizing the value of labour power. The reserves have, however, always had a crucial political bearing on the political relations of domination; in the 1970s these political developments were being taken to their logical conclusion. (Response not to "crisis in reserves" but class struggle in the cities!)

157. On the mines, for example, employers prefer workers from Lesotho as lashers and Mozambiquan workers as machinists. These ethnic policies are obviously not based on any inherent qualities of particular groups of workers, but different levels of proletarianization as well as the inevitable one of 'divide and rule'. Zulu workers are much preferred as private police in compounds and as night watchmen: drawing on the military tradition of the Zulu people.
158. Sack, 1, 1976: 45-46
159. The increase in the number of workers from Mahlabathini is so sudden that the writer was not sure whether he had made an error in recording the statistics. His table of distribution of workers by district was, however, personally checked by Dreyer (who corrected his spelling), and it will subsequently be argued why such a drastic change would be logical.
160. Sack, 1, 1976: 35
161. *ibid.*: 33fn
162. *do.*: 34. This figure is arrived at by assuming that workers who had been unable to have more than three years education were 'functionally illiterate'. Some 60 per cent of the workers had not been to school at all.
163. White householders have found it annoying that African male servants sometimes refuse to clean lavatories or wash women's underwear, but these are minor issues in comparison to the employment of Zulu workers under conditions which are possibly worse than other African workers.
164. Sack, 1, 1976: 33
165. Sack provides a lengthy discussion of the religions of migrant workers employed by the SARH and has developed the traditionalist/Christian dichotomy in part as an explanation for the more militant views of the stevedoring workers. This is a significant secondary issue, but he fails to deal with the primary one of the origins of the class consciousness

of the workers. In the writer's experience workers who are traditionalists have no hesitation in advocating force as a legitimate weapon of struggle, but have had a weaker commitment to thorough underground organization.

166. In J.B. Buthelezi's letter to the Wages Commission he mentioned Mahlabathini first in a list of districts which had suffered victimization during the 1969 strike.

## CHAPTER 8

### Trade unionism and mass strikes

At the Company ... management-employee relationships were very good indeed — and, in my opinion, one reason that the stevedores did strike, was that they were confident of a sympathetic response from their management.

Sack, II: 17

J. B. Buthelezi won't see Christmas!

Stevedoring worker, 17 July 1972

The consolidation of the Bantustan regimes in the reserves increased enormously the political and bureaucratic control over African migrant workers. One of the features of the pass system was that despite its legalistic and administrative details it never achieved the efficiency the legislators intended. Workers continued to pour into the towns illegally, and at one point the police even complained it was not their prime function to control the movement of workers. The new Bantustan regimes with their pretensions to independence from the apartheid state, to a 'national' identity, and to citizenship, eased the acceptance of the tightening of the pass controls.<sup>1</sup> The articulation of some of the demands of workers (for instance the right of African workers to join trade unions) and the radical posturing of some of the Bantustan leaders against national oppression, secured a measure of toleration of the leaders who protested there was no alternative to the Bantustans.<sup>2</sup> For some workers, the contradiction between the Bantustan regimes and the interests of the working class was not immediately obvious, as the apartheid state was blamed for the mass resettlement schemes and desperate impoverishment of the people, all which were the logical steps in implementing the Bantustan program.<sup>3</sup> While leaders like Chief Gatsha Buthelezi protested against the way in which the resettlement schemes were being implemented, they were careful to be out of sight when the Bantu Administration trucks moved in.<sup>4</sup> With the intensification of national oppression, the 'radical' Bantustan leaders became more outspoken in their expression of black nationalism and more ambitious as the leaders of the oppressed masses.

As the boom of 1970-72 began to recede and the reserve army of labour was increasingly trapped by the tribal labour bureaux in the Bantustans, the struggle of black workers in the industrial centres became increasingly urgent. The rising tempo of class struggle raised fundamental questions about the possibilities of working class struggle, the demands which were being made by the workers, and whether any form of open class organization was possible for African workers under the conditions of intense national

oppression. Since underground activity was in evidence in advanced sections of the African working class, what would be the relation between this level of organization and the works committees, benefit funds, and trade unions being established? Was working class organization to be directed primarily at the state which was acting to destroy all organization of resistance, or could the struggle against the employers on the wage issue develop into mass forms of resistance both against the employers and the state which backed with force every decision of the employers? As an important secondary issue, would the African petty-bourgeoisie turn towards the working class in the forthcoming struggles, and add their support to working class demands? These were some of the issues faced by the workers and those groups who were assisting in the development of new working class organizations. The struggle of the stevedoring workers to develop a level of open organization and a coordinated strategy provided some answers to these questions through the concrete experience of the workers.

### The stevedoring committee

Following their demands being put forward at the Wage Board sitting, the stevedoring workers were determined to become organized in a semi-open manner to build up the unity between the DSLSC and Grindrod workers and to press their demands on the employers and the Wage Board.<sup>5</sup> The meetings of the workers which were held at Bolton Hall where the GFWBF was based immediately raised the questions of the tactics of organization, the procedures to be adopted in developing grievances into demands, and the final objectives of the workers' organization. Between July 1972 and March 1973 about thirty meetings were held, the grievances of the workers were documented and attempts made to defend individual workers through legal means. Numerous other consultations were held between officials and leading workers. The group of workers from the stevedoring companies constituted themselves into a stevedoring committee in writing letters and deciding general policy, and elections for the works committees later established in the docks were

held before the formal elections at the companies. The meetings ranged from between five workers to over a hundred and were fiercely democratic; those present representing delegated authority from others not at the meeting or at work. Before the stevedoring group can be discussed, however, the general strategy of the GFWBF needs to be developed.

Based initially on African workers in the garment and furniture industry, the GFWBF soon came to attract workers from other industries: textiles, motor assemblies, the abattoir. The aim of the benefit fund initially was to overcome the fear of African workers of associating as workers (the national oppression of the African people strongly reinforcing the idea that any association of workers was illegal) and to build a mass base from which the trade unions could grow. Without a precise plan or strategy other than generating a movement of workers in which policies could be democratically arrived at, the GFWBF grew surprisingly rapidly. From early discussions the workers decided on a funeral benefit as the main benefit; the other aims of the society were to fight for the benefits which African workers should get by law (for instance, unemployment insurance) but from which they were excluded by an obdurate Department of Labour or by employers. The benefit society also aimed at educating workers in industrial legislation, particularly on the formation of works committees, and to help workers with their complaints. These aims deliberately fell short of those of a trade union: industrial organization, demands on wages and conditions, factory-by-factory organization, and demands on the state; the intention was to provide a basis for association as workers on the widest possible and least controversial common grounds. The aims were designed not to attract the attention of the police and employers before registration with the Registrar of Friendly Societies could be achieved. As in the case of early industrial organization of workers in Britain, the attempt was being made to establish a benefit society as an embryonic form of trade unionism. Once sufficient workers had joined from any industry, an industrial union would be organized, its financial burden being met initially from all members.

This particular strategy was dictated by the relatively cautious response of workers to the idea of establishing immediately trade union organization on an open basis and by the need to manoeuvre within the legal system. Initially the workers and officials were testing each other to find out what basis for organization existed.<sup>6</sup> These workers demanded a legal organization which would not lead to victimization by employers and the state, a constitution, and registration as a friendly society. These demands were made to overcome the paralyzing fear of organizing as workers in a highly repressive society. While the urban life of African people abounds with associations in common law: football clubs, churches, stokfella, dancing clubs, and even residents' associations, the workers were not entirely convinced with the legal opinion that unregistered trade unions were also common law associations and thus 'legal'.<sup>7</sup> Despite some doubts about its legal standing, subscriptions were taken from workers before registration as a friendly society was secured. As membership mushroomed, the fears of the leaders of the GFWBF were partly allayed.<sup>8</sup> Members came from all sections of society: the self-employed, domestic servants, factory workers, unemployed, and commercial workers; hundreds of firms had at least one member. Apart from the attraction of the benefit fund as a means of providing a basis for working class organization, African people as a whole were enthusiastic because it was African controlled, efficient and cheap, in comparison to the grossly exploitative insurance companies or shady township operators. Its fast expansion and wide appeal was, however, not a source of strength; few workers joined as a coherent and organized group. But it was the militant groupings of workers in the abattoir and the docks which were to provide the lead in the new period of mass strike action.

The stevedoring workers were the first group of workers to enter the GFWBF with clear industrial demands and a level of internal organization which reflected their commanding position at the centre of the labour process in the docks. The first groupings in the GFWBF, the furniture and garment

workers, had a more dependent attitude on the registered trade union in each industry and no declared positions on changes in these industries or wider political demands.<sup>9</sup> The stevedores had a more 'activist' conception of the benefit fund, rather than the 'constitutionalist' approach of workers in other industries, and met as a group as frequently as was possible. The meetings were squeezed in either on Saturdays or days when large numbers of the workers were not on call, making regularity difficult to achieve. This meant there were problems in getting workers from both the DSLSC and Grindrods together at the same time. A further difficulty was that the workers were exhausted, some dropping off to sleep during the meetings.

#### Internal organization and demands

The meetings of the stevedoring workers with GFWBF officials changed as the confidence of the workers in the organization grew. Initially, the meetings took the form of 'hearings' at which workers told the officials more about the labour process in the docks and the (sometimes highly specific) demands of different classes of workers. With time the meetings evolved into a type of executive committee of a trade union as a chairperson was elected with a committee. The tendency was, however, for this structure to disintegrate on occasion because leading workers were at work or unable to attend the meetings, often because they were trying to catch up on sleep, or were injured. Because of the changing shift system, overtime, and other disturbances in the composition of the meeting the dominant atmosphere was one of a workers' council with a high level of participation from all present, rather than a brisk executive committee meeting. The meetings were strongly democratic, with the elected leadership cautiously putting forward their views and attempting to reach a consensus. A persistent problem (and one which was impossible completely to resolve) was the presence of spies in the meetings, an issue which was to affect the level of participation of the DSLSC workers.<sup>10</sup> The issue obviously affected the

possibility of fully democratic decisions being reached by the workers' delegates, as some workers were increasingly afraid of meeting openly, but the question of underground and secret organization was not raised.<sup>11</sup>

Far from the stevedoring workers being satisfied with their conditions, as Sack records after interviewing them with permission from the DSLSC management, there was such an avalanche of grievances and demands that the question of organization almost became submerged.<sup>12</sup> The winchmen demanded a teabreak between 1300 and 2000, they were not provided with gloves and cut their hands on wires on the winches. They also wanted danger money for working on the electric cranes on the ships which gave them shocks. All the workers complained they were not allowed to go to the toilet when the docks were being worked non-stop. They were not given a night shift allowance. 'We told them that our wives demand extra money — they have to stay at home without us.' The workers got no annual bonus despite working almost without a break during the year. The Grindrod workers, most of whom live in the townships, complained their wages were totally inadequate to meet the cost of rent and transport. 'When we are late because of bad transport we have to rush straight to work without clocking our tickets. Because we have not clocked the ticket we are not paid for that day. When we call for a white foreman or an induna to witness for us the compound manager says: "You have worked for nothing".' The workers complained they were assaulted by the white foremen at work and the company did nothing. 'The compound manager says the whites are doing a good job when they assault the workers — it makes them work harder.' They all fiercely resented the abusive language of the foremen: 'Your work is up to shit!' 'The compound manager himself assaults the workers — for simple reasons like checking the post when we are waiting for a ship.' Telegrams from their families were not handed over to the workers — when the port was busy the telegrams were hidden from the workers.<sup>13</sup> Most of all, the workers at Grindrods complained about being denied their holidays;

all were having to work at least two years before being granted leave. The time of leave was completely dictated by the employers.

Even the indunas complained of being reduced to forced labour. The employers blamed them if any workers were missing. 'They know we do not live in one place. When we tell the employers we don't know where the workers are the boss says we are useless.' The indunas have to wait at the office to pick up the list of work to be done on the ships, but if the work was not started by the time the white foreman arrives there was trouble. 'It is the induna who keeps the list of work to be done; the workers cannot start working until the induna arrives.' The indunas felt their lives were endangered by company regulations. 'When we are right inside the ship the indunas are told to stand in the centre of the hold. When the crane gets down towards the induna and he moves away for safety, the foreman accuses him of not being in position.'

All workers complained of the poor arrangements for injuries. Injured workers were not provided with stretchers, they had to walk off the ship to the first aid. The compensation for the high level of accidents was completely inadequate, many workers were permanently disabled as a result of injuries and the only thanks they earned was their dismissal. The two other major complaints were compulsory overtime and the lack of payslips to distinguish between basic wages and overtime.<sup>14</sup>

The key problems posed by the workers were how to overcome the fear of the workers to take action to organize themselves and how to build their strength. This fear was of retaliation both by the state and employers: police interrogations, firing and victimization, loss of earnings and the ability to provide for the family. Oppression took a very concrete form for these workers. The GFWBF officials outlined the projected development of the benefit fund and argued there should be a workers' committee for each

company to replace the collaborators such as J. B. Buthelezi. 'You are some of the best workers in the organization, you must provide the leadership of the general workers' organization. As the most militant workers in Durban you must be the backbone and provide the leadership of the organization.' The strategy for organization which was presented was that each worker at the meeting should be required to find another worker he could trust. The stevedoring members of the GFWBF at Grindrods should meet quietly near work, in the township, or at the office. A committee should be elected to take decisions between meetings. The officials presented mass membership as a means of overcoming the fear of open organization. 'Strength is in numbers. When the management asks: Who are you?, you can answer: We speak for all the workers, if you touch us, you touch 600 men, beware!' The members of the GFWBF should win over the indunas to the organization but also get an elected delegate from every gang.

The open form of organization which was being proposed for the workers at Grindrods did not meet with immediate repression at the DSLSC where the management was cautiously regaining the grip over the workers it had lost at the Wage Board sitting. Although there was a pervasive fear of retaliation, it appears as though changes had been brought about in the form of control over the workers. The indunas, stung and humiliated by the denunciation of their collaboration by the labourers and impressed by the solidarity displayed at the Wage Board sitting where the labourers had been supported by the Wages Commission, TUCSA, and the Natal Indian Congress, were uneasy in the new conditions of struggle.<sup>15</sup> On the wage front demands had been made which even exceeded their earnings and the violent antagonism to J. B. Buthelezi could be directed against them. In this situation the indunas were careful in their relations with the workers and stopped reporting malingerers and ordering dismissals.

Before taking on a policy of 'frightfulness' which came to characterize relations in the DSLSC, militant workers were cautiously picked off one by one, management making sure to cover itself by appearing to make a careful investigation into each case. As will be discussed later, it is difficult for the stevedoring workers to make an immediate response to victimization because of the nature of the labour process. Workers can be called in to the office from the ships and never be seen again, the gangs are dispersed over a wide area, and the employers have control over the workers' accommodation. The worker may have been arrested by the Railway Police or other police, or injured and in hospital.<sup>16</sup> There are obviously some differences in response from the workers to an individual worker who is dismissed for having a private quarrel with another worker or for assaulting a foreman. Management in the post-hearing period was cautious to emphasize its 'objectivity' in firing workers, and the extraneous rather than material factors in dismissals. It was also careful not to pick on leading militants but to work at the fringes of collective action by the labourers.

The management counter-strategy was clearly demonstrated in the victimization of a worker who appeared at the Wage Board hearing who lived in the Nkandla district. While at work on Sunday early in August this worker was found by a foreman near to a beer tin talking to other workers. After an argument about whether he had been selling beer to the workers on duty (the tin was empty), the worker was taken to the DSLSC offices and both sides presented their arguments to the compound manager. Although the manager said it was impossible that a foreman could lie and say there was liquor in the tin, there was some doubt about the case and 'judgement' was reserved until the afternoon. The worker was then told he had been found guilty of selling liquor and then, importantly, that he would have only been reprimanded if he had not been seen at the Wage Board hearing. 'I was fired because I was going to influence people with Communism.' When

this statement was made the worker refused to sign his acceptance of his severance pay which also did not include notice pay. The worker was told he was free to leave the DSLSC with nothing, and take his complaint to anyone who wanted to hear; if he wanted any money from the company he would have to sign his acceptance of his dismissal and the wages without notice pay. His signature would declare that he had received all the wages due to him. The worker eventually had to sign because of his pass irregularities. All he had was an identity certificate, and the worker requested a letter giving the reasons for termination of service and as a record of work so he would be able to apply for work again at the tribal labour bureaux in Nkandla. The compound manager gave him a document which allowed him to be in the Durban magisterial area for three days.<sup>17</sup> In the middle of the night, however, he was woken and expelled from the compound by the compound induna. He took his belongings and managed to find a place to sleep in a scrap car for the night. Such was the 'benevolence' of the Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Company.

This victimization posed enormous problems for the worker, the solidarity of the stevedoring workers, and the GFWBF. Only the main features of the worker's statement are presented here, the details of each incident affecting the workers were voluminous with many possibly significant side issues. The dismissal was clearly one of victimization in terms of the Wage Act or even the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, but there was no likelihood of it ever reaching the courts. Lawyers engaged by the GFWBF did not know even how to start bringing such a case to court.<sup>18</sup> The issue was obviously not primarily a legal one, however; it was a question of social power; only immediate strike action by the workers and disciplining of the compound induna could have secured the re-employment of the worker or kept the issue alive. As it was, the worker, after signing his acceptance of the severance pay and making a statement, said he was not wanting to be re-employed by such an oppressive company as the DSLSC.

The victimization exposed the powerlessness of the GFWBF 'industrial rights' strategy: without an army of expert lawyers and a sympathetic Department of Labour no advantage accrued to workers from any of the protective clauses in bourgeois law.<sup>19</sup> While it was important to defend workers by all the legal means available, ultimately the defence of the workers had to be carried out by themselves through their power in production, rather than through even an activist 'office'.

These conclusions were not immediately obvious either to the workers who were looking to the 'office' for leadership and a strategy to deal with victimization, or to the officials who argued that mass membership of the GFWBF was the solution to the fear of the workers. One of the leading workers said that more dismissals were likely to take place and that 'drastic measures' should be taken. The GFWBF officials suggested that the workers could respond by demanding the conditions set down in the WD 308 on sick pay, which the workers said was not being paid at either company, and on holidays, which was a burning question at Grindrods. The workers agreed that the delegates elected from the gangs should be trained as shop stewards in the stevedoring section of the GFWBF, that WD 308 should be photocopied, and that a handbook should be produced which the workers could carry with them at all times carrying, in simple language, the details of conditions of service and how to defend themselves. The workers were enthusiastic about the mass distribution of WD 308; one of the workers from Grindrod said that the workers' representatives who had demanded it in 1969 had been dismissed, and that he had only survived because his foreman defended him.<sup>20</sup> The issue of leave was an explosive one at Grindrods; the workers were amazed to learn that the wage determination laid down a fortnight's leave after the worker had completed twelve months' work, and there were shouts of indignation that this knowledge had been denied them.<sup>21</sup> The difficulty with using the leave issue as a counter lever to the reassertion of the employers' control over the workers, as would be discovered later, was that it

tended to become a question of the rights of individual workers to leave rather than an issue around which to mobilize collectively.

The immediate issue which had been raised by the weakening of control over the workers by the collective demands being made at the Wage Board was the question of overtime; whether the employers had the right to compel workers to do overtime on Saturday or Sunday. At a meeting on 5 August 1972 of the workers it was reported that the indunas of the DSLSC had been called together and asked whether they had heard anything about a rumour that the workers were going to refuse to work on Sunday, 6 August 1972. They said they had heard nothing, but the officials were concerned and said they should report if they heard anything. This important issue was not discussed much further because there were few DSLSC workers present and these said they were 'surprised and embarrassed' by the absence of the others.<sup>22</sup> The discussion revealed an uneasy relationship both between the workers and the employers, and some tensions among the workers.

The dock employers moved on to the offensive during the following week by attempting to consolidate the indunas and winchmen against the labourers. Meetings were held at both companies at which the company officials berated the indunas for their indecisiveness as the demands of the labourers gained strength. At Grindrods on Saturday, 12 August at 1130, the workers reported that the indunas were summonsed and asked why they were no longer firing the malingerers as before. They were told to watch the workers carefully and to report any faults in their work so they could be dismissed because of the strong rumour that the workers were expecting the wage increase demanded at the Wage Board meeting. At the Point a large meeting of senior indunas, indunas, and winchmen was held on Tuesday, 8 August 1972, at 1400, at which it was said that the workers were trying to be clever' by demanding higher wages, and that the workers should be watched.

J. B. Buthelezi, whom the workers described as compound manager, was reportedly most enthusiastic about tightening up the controls over the workers; his word was to be final on any case of dismissal. The long service workers were most afraid they would be fired and new workers taken on in their place. The workers were told that all sloppy dress had to end: their helmets had to be worn with the visor in the front otherwise they would 'be putting the company at the back of you'.<sup>23</sup>

The policy of 'frightfulness' of the employers was a product of their losing control of the direct disciplining of the workers because of the new assertiveness of the labourers and their compelling wage demand. The indunas were caught in a tight vice of contradictory pressures between the rising aspirations of the labourers, and the demands of the employers that they should reassert their former powers. Among the workers some sections looked immediately for allies outside the working class, the inhuman policies of the DSLSC had to be curbed by any forces available, and the intervention of the Zulu Paramount Chief was sought not to advance the workers' demands, but to discipline J. B. Buthelezi and stop the dismissals. The shifting allegiances of the indunas between the labourers and the employers, and the question of support for the disciplining of J. B. Buthelezi by the African petty bourgeoisie in the reserves, were to dominate the discussions of the workers, until the urgency of the workers' demands propelled the workers' movement ahead.

While the new policies of the employers aimed at striking terror into the hearts of the long service and militant labourers, many indunas were also very unhappy about their position as the tools of the management. In discussions with the indunas at the workplace many said they had the same fear as the labourers. One of the leading members of the GFWBF spoke to a senior induna who was totally opposed to the new regime; this worker said that he should come to the GFWBF offices to see that the growing

strength of the workers was 'not lies'. He felt that if the senior induna was won over he would influence the 'inferior' indunas against carrying out the employers' orders, and the workers' organization would be immensely strengthened. This worker also mentioned that one of the Grindrod indunas had been dismissed although found not guilty in court on a charge of stealing goods from the ships.<sup>24</sup> This case seemed to imply that any reluctance on the part of the indunas to carry out instructions would face them with the same fate as the labourers. The DSLSC officials did not hesitate to start carrying out the hard line; three workers coming in late from Kwa Mashu because they had been delayed by transport were fired immediately.<sup>25</sup>

It was possibly from the indunas that the initiative was taken to approach the Paramount Chief about J. B. Buthelezi.<sup>26</sup> Some external intervention would remove the burden of having to meet either the demands of the employers or the labourers. The worker who reported on the issue gave equal approval to both the Paramount Chief and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi as being opposed to apartheid. He said that J. B. Buthelezi had been summonsed by the Paramount Chief as he was being accused of assisting in the oppression of the stevedoring workers, and abusing the workers. He said that J. B. Buthelezi was not a member of the Royal Family and that as compound manager his only greatness was lording it over the workers. The worker suggested that J. B. Buthelezi would be taken to Swaziland in exile and would be deprived of Zulu 'nationality'; he was getting on in years and had no right to fight against the rights of the younger generation. The GFWBF officials were surprised by this sudden development, all discussion up to this point being fundamentally on the independent organization of the workers without considering the question of the growing importance of the Bantustans. The approach of a group of the workers to the Paramount Chief was unexpected, but if what was claimed was valid, the removal of J. B. Buthelezi would significantly weaken the power of the employers and enable a rapid advance of the stevedoring section of the GFWBF into a mass organization.

The reports on the response of the indunas seemed to indicate that they were 'coming over' to the side of the workers. The fear the employers were intensifying among the labourers was infecting the black supervisors. Who could be secure in this new situation? For the first time an induna from the DSLSC attended the meeting of the GFWBF and expressed appreciation of the growing organization of the workers. Again, some of the members of the GFWBF felt that this was a crucial advance, if the indunas were drawn to the organization then the workers would have no fear in coming to the meetings of stevedores in large numbers or in signing the GFWBF membership forms.

The strategy of some of the workers in approaching the Paramount Chief to get rid of J. B. Buthelezi seemed to have worked. At a meeting on Friday, 25 August 1972, the worker who had previously raised the issue announced proudly that Jakonia Buthelezi had left the DSLSC on Thursday, he had packed everything and had gone. He had been disciplined because at the meeting at the DSLSC on 8 August he had said the workers were not to expect a wage increase. The Paramount Chief had called him up and told him he was not allowed to continue his work in Durban 'because this is a Zulu country'. There was general rejoicing at the removal of one of the primary tormentors of the workers. It was said that the reason there had not been more workers from the DSLSC at the meetings was because they were frightened of J. B. Buthelezi. His removal was thought to give the workers an opportunity of reorganizing in the face of the 'frightful' policies being adopted by the stevedoring companies.

This 'turning towards' the traditional African petty bourgeoisie as a potential ally to the workers' organization led immediately (at the same meeting) to the suggestion that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi should be invited to address the stevedoring committee to take the opportunity of his legal position within the Bantustan to have a mass meeting of workers; this, it was

suggested, would strengthen the workers and 'cause the bosses to respect the worker'. It was only with a strong stevedoring committee within the GFWBF that the workers could stop the firing of workers. 'When we have a strong committee, Mr. Neaves will stop firing the workers and give them respect.' After some discussion it was agreed to invite Gatsha Buthelezi to have a meeting with the workers.<sup>27</sup>

The rather abrupt change in the orientation of the workers from the mass mobilization which the GFWBF officials put forward as a general solution to the problems of the workers' disorganization and fear of victimization to searching for allies in the workers' struggle outside the working class caused some confusion to the GFWBF officials. The whole tenor of their arguments was that it was the African workers who had the power to transform their humiliation and exploitation if sufficient unity could be attained. The workers had been encouraged to turn the meetings of delegates into mass meetings of stevedores. Meetings of GFWBF members should be held at the workplace or in the townships to build up nuclei organizations within the wider stevedoring committee, and an elected stevedoring committee should make decisions which would carry the weight of delegated authority. Given the intense support for the demands of the delegates at the Wage Board and contained in the letter sent to the Wages Commission from the underground organization at the DSLSC, it was assumed that the general forward movement of the workers would contain the environment in which a proto-union could mature and move into a position of open authority in relation to the stevedoring employers. The strategy of the workers should be to build up groups of workers in production who were members of the GFWBF, elect delegates who would act like shop stewards in the British trade unions, train the shop stewards in the collection of subscriptions and industrial demands, and develop an executive committee. The GFWBF officials were particularly impressed with the growing power and mass membership of a general workers' union such as the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) in the

United Kingdom which had originally been based on dock workers and felt that with an intelligent use of industrial demands within a possibly amorphous general organization, recognition would be forced from the employers and the workers could then address the political tasks of their organization.<sup>28</sup>

In the face of the employers' counter-offensive the officials stressed the urgency of diverting discussion from the complaints and grievances of the workers towards their organization at a number of levels: in the gangs, the companies, and as stevedoring workers as a whole; and in particular to initiate discussions between DSLSC and Grindrod workers on the ships and wharves. The worker who proved himself most capable in supplying information on the underworld of repression and victimization at the workplace, and most in touch with the general position of the workers at the DSLSC, was also the worker who reported on and approved of the action of the Paramount Chief. As a capable leader of the workers, having worked long in the docks and increasingly active in building the unity of the DSLSC and Grindrod workers during the counter-offensive, his position was unchallenged. It was, however, a younger worker who suggested strengthening the workers' movement by inviting Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to address a mass meeting of dock workers. This worker was most enthusiastic about building up the GFWBF into a mass organization and took the tasks of patiently explaining to workers the purpose of the GFWBF, and bringing workers to the offices so they could see the product of organized workers. The differences were more of tendencies, rather than fundamental outlook; both seeing the unity of the workers as the main issue, one demanding 'drastic measures' to prepare the ground for mass organization, the other feeling the unity of the workers a matter of accumulating the confidence of the workers in organization.<sup>29</sup> They showed differences in approach to the organization of the stevedoring workers, the older worker stressing the need to win over the indunas and thus the men under them, and the younger the need to convince individual workers to cut across the work groups in production.

Having worked from the immediate demands of the workers to the question of industrial organization, in the six weeks between the Wage Board hearing and the call for Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to address the workers, the officials had not dealt with the wider questions of the political economy or specifically the position of the Bantustans within apartheid society. It was not simply a matter of time, although the workers needed to gain confidence in the officials on the basis of a day-to-day struggle, but of strategy: by championing the economic demands of the workers it was hoped to expose both the class nature of the apartheid state and the liberal bourgeoisie to the workers. By organizing the African workers in trade unions and persisting in raising their fundamental economic demands, the black working class would be able to advance by maintaining the allegiance of the workers through forcing concessions directly from employers or through the Wage Board. But because the apartheid state was insisting that African workers were 'temporary sojourners' in the industrial urban areas there could be no accommodation between trade unions which fought for their very existence in these areas and the state. While maintaining a mass base, the working class movement would be forced into daily combat with the state and would raise the fundamental contradiction within the national oppression of the African people: the strategic position of African workers in production and the state which acted to perpetuate their impermanence in the urban areas. The stress on popular economic demands and the insistence on the legality of unregistered trade unions was also seen as a solution to the problem of differences between 'backward' and 'advanced' workers. While some politically mature workers would realize from the beginning the incompatibility between the authentic organization of workers and the apartheid state, this could not be the campaigning slogan of the trade unions. The advanced workers could take up the question of trade union organization and industrial demands as a means of 'forcing the pace' of class consciousness for those workers who were politically quiet because of an over-riding concern for job and family security.<sup>30</sup> While the GFWBF officials did not see the

forward movement as everything and the final aim as nothing (the political aims of the working class movement were presented in discussions with advanced workers in secure surroundings), an evolutionary approach was being adopted in the development of political consciousness. As the workers' movement came into conflict with the state so more advanced arguments would be employed to explain the nature of the relation between the employers and the state, without destroying the basis for association between workers and losing the 'backward' workers.

This approach has been rigorously criticized by Lenin for not developing the struggle of the workers on a national political plane, 'not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organized political force'.<sup>31</sup> The GFWBF officials were distant from having such a developed class perspective, and their political consciousness was constituted around a radical rather than a Marxist critique of apartheid society, reflecting rather than decisively leading the struggle of the workers. The benefit fund strategy did indeed embody a theory of political development of the African working class being a process of tactical struggle; that the very foundation of the workers' association was likely to be declared illegal, but that the workers would by this stage have the confidence to continue their organizations whatever the policy of the state. The tremendous advance which the benefit fund marked in the organization of the workers, which was only possible because of its apparently legal and non-political character, did not automatically lead to a revolutionary class consciousness.<sup>32</sup> For this level of consciousness to be reached:

The worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the vagabond; he must know their strong and weak points; he must grasp the meaning of all the catchwords and sophisms by which each class and each stratum camouflages its selfish interests

and its real 'inner workings'; he must understand what interests are reflected by certain institutions and certain laws and how they are reflected.<sup>33</sup>

The GFWBF officials themselves were far from having such a revolutionary class consciousness, and what political understanding they had seemed remote from the 'proletarian politics' involved in the arguments about forms of working class organization, the question of legality, and the importance of wage demands to the African working class living in desperate poverty. Although the GFWBF officials acted in a coordinated manner they in no sense approached the role of a revolutionary party which Lenin argues is essential to providing the political leadership of the working class. Not having developed their own, and the workers' political consciousness to a thorough class analysis and strategy, the GFWBF officials found themselves suddenly confronted by an issue they would rather have had brought up further in the evolution of the workers' organization. There had not been a discussion with the workers about the position of the Bantustans within the political economy of apartheid, nor specifically the class position of the African petty bourgeoisie in the reserves and their relationship to African workers. If the traditional leadership was prepared to take action in support of the workers' demands against their enemies (as personified for many workers in the rule of J.B. Buthelezi) then their action seemed to point to contradictions between different elements which appeared to be responsive to an organized African working class. If this was the case, the officials would view the relationship between the workers and the traditional African petty bourgeoisie empirically rather than from the theoretical viewpoint of a working class party.

#### Change in hours and works committee

Although the workers' suggestion that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi should be invited to address them diverted discussions at the meeting of 25 August 1972 to the question of political support for the nascent workers' organizations, the issues which were to dominate the thinking of the workers in the following

period were those of changed hours, and the possibility of forming a works committee at Grindrods. The two issues were closely connected: with the arbitrary changes in working conditions by the employers, the workers sought legal methods of disputing the employers' prerogatives. By mid-September it appeared that some of the pressure on the workers, the scrutiny and threats of dismissal, had eased as larger numbers of workers came to the meetings of the stevedoring section of the GFWBF. The question of changed hours riveted the attention of the workers on the wage demands and demands for an end to compulsory overtime and Sunday work which had been made at the Wage Board hearing.

The most encouraging development for the GFWBF officials and the Grindrod workers was the imposing presence of the DSLSC delegates. This increase in the level of participation in the stevedoring meetings had been stimulated both by an apparent easing of victimization by management and the publication of Isisebenzi 6 which carried a report of the representations made to the Wage Board under the headline 'Stevedores demand R18 a week'. The same issue carried a letter pointing out the difference in earnings between indunas employed by the DSLSC and other companies in the docks and demanding shorter hours and an end to income tax. The letter from the stevedoring labourers outlining their demands was republished.<sup>34</sup> One of the leading workers from the DSLSC had been attracted to the meeting by the newspaper, but wondered how many workers at the Point knew that these meetings were taking place. (The meetings had deliberately not been advertized so that the workers present would be likely to know and trust each other.) The views of the DSLSC workers will be presented in some detail as they represent the first major intervention from a group of workers at the company, coming as it did after the apparent removal of J.B. Buthelezi. As in the case of the Grindrod workers, some of the most 'forward' workers with a clear grasp of the labour process and precise industrial demands were the graded workers and indunas.

The workers voiced a most profound antipathy to the DSLSC, protesting against their oppression with great spirit. In contrast to the Grindrod workers who had a sense of the personalities making up management, and even some illusions about the impartiality of M. Grindrod, the DSLSC workers perceived management as a monolithic organization with malevolent intentions.<sup>35</sup> One of the workers who had been employed as a stevedore from 1935 had a deep historical consciousness of the workers' struggle. The conditions of the workers, he argued, had been getting steadily worse since 1959 when the labour supply company had been formed. He had not got any information about the Wage Board hearing apart from what he had read in Isisebenzi and he had no idea what happened at the Wage Board hearing 'because information is not divulged to us at the Point'. There was no committee of workers at the Point: 'It is the employers who choose the works committee and force us to accept it; that committee does not tell us what was said at the meeting. Usually I read in the newspapers what is happening.'<sup>36</sup> This worker felt that industrial legislation must have been suspended in the docks because of the extraordinarily long hours. There was 'reporting time' between 0600 and clocking on at 0720 and eventually the workers only knocked off at 2100. He pointed out all the anomalies in different increases in the components of the wage.<sup>37</sup> He charged the DSLSC with not providing the workers with sick pay, or a night shift allowance, and said there was no day off or sick leave.

Far from the induna being able to command the workers, 'if you are an induna you are a slave'. He argued that the employers squeezed out the maximum amount of work from the indunas by keeping their numbers down. 'When a white from overseas is employed at the Point you are forced to teach him the job.' There were no wages for such instruction. Again, when a winchman was not on duty the induna was required to do his job. 'That means you are not the induna but all the other workers.' The winchmen were not paid the rate for the job, only when they were required to operate

a winch or a crane, otherwise they received the labourers' rate.<sup>38</sup> For all the workers the cargo allowances were by no means guaranteed, 'you have to persuade the foreman to give you your allowance'. There were problems in getting the work tickets marked with the cargo allowance for poisonous cargoes, and 'if you request the increase you are deported to the reserves'. There were at least 300 workers who did not live in the DSLSC compound but none of these workers got a travelling allowance. The indunas were far from satisfied with their wages; only the senior indunas were represented on the committee and 'we don't know if they get an increase or not'. The DSLSC indunas were falling behind other indunas in the dock area, those employed by Dusty Millars earned R22 a week and earned bonuses in June and December.<sup>39</sup>

This worker who had a thorough grasp of the 'industrial' demands of the workers articulated the ambiguous feelings of the operators and indunas under the compelling pressure of the employers and the rising resistance of the labourers. The employers were consistently attempting to turn the indunas and operators into a 'bloc' against the labourers, a group which commanded the technical skills in production against the collective skills of the labourers. The contradictions in the position of the indunas, even under the whip of dismissal, were clear. With the rising demands of the labourers for wages which were even higher than their level of wages they would 'turn towards' the labourers, temper their power to dismiss or recommend dismissal, but bring with them into the collective organization of the workers their 'own' demands. The underground letter from the labourers repudiated the indunas as a whole for their collaboration with management; under these pressures the black supervisors could become secret sympathizers, impartial arbiters, or tyrants. At no stage, however, could they articulate the demands of the workers as a whole to the management no matter how aggrieved they might feel. Their manoeuvring under pressure was vividly described by a labourer at an earlier meeting. He dealt with the question of the indunas

(sympathizers and tyrants) claiming to 'lead' the workers, and the disunity of the African workers. 'You cannot speak for the others because you are always in the sight of the Company. I ask the leaders why they don't speak for the workers when they are in the place of the bosses. When we are fighting you go to make peace. Because you are in the workers' eyes and in the Company's eyes you cannot be a leader for both.'<sup>40</sup> The other workers from the Point stressed that the demands of the indunas by no means meant they were won over to the position of the workers as a whole: 'many of the indunas are after us'. One of the workers faced the meeting with his predicament. He had spoken at the Wage Board meeting and had been told by a friendly clerk that the management had his name and that when he would take his leave his services would be terminated. 'What will happen is that when my contract expires I won't be taken on again.' Some mark had been made in his pass book which he did not understand. 'I don't know if I will get a permit to get another job.' According to the clerk he would be thanked for his services to the company and performing his duties, but not re-engaged. This subtle form of victimization would make the company completely immune from any possibility of being charged in terms of the Wage Act for victimization, it would simply make use of the regulations in terms of the Bantu Labour Act of 1964 which limited contracts of service to a maximum of 360 shifts a year. The victimization would in strictly legal terms then not be one of dismissal but of refusal to re-engage a worker.<sup>41</sup> The mark on his pass raised the possibility that militant African workers could not only be victimized by one employer but get a 'political' stamp on his documents which would lead to his being hounded by the labour bureaux and dismissed from job after job. No solutions to this apparently insoluble problem were suggested by the other workers and the GFWBF officials; the problem faced the GFWBF with the acute responsibility of acting as a workers' defence organization. The question was, however, not a personal but a general organizational one: how to retaliate decisively to the gradual weakening of the advance of the workers. The incident showed that the

DSLSC was moving more intelligently after the apparent removal of J. B. Buthelezi and was cautiously tracking down the leading militants and employing a variety of legal stratagems to cover itself both from legal action or retaliatory strikes.<sup>42</sup> The lack of a strategy from the GFWBF officials and the workers themselves to this insidious counter-assault will be discussed in a later section dealing with the severe limitations of the 'industrial rights' strategy of the GFWBF and the problems of workers' defence.

The other workers from the Point voiced a wide range of grievances, general demands as well as the industrial questions. One of the winchmen complained that as much labour-time as possible was being extracted from the workers; after completing the task on one ship they were immediately transferred to another. The workers were becoming exhausted and wanted a reward for finishing the first task as the ship was then free to leave. The wages in stevedoring were low, he complained, and had to be 'squandered' on the workers' food. On top of the long hours and low wages the workers were being taxed on overtime: 'I get nothing from PAYE'. The conditions at the docks were much worse than in the factories which had shorter hours and usually an annual bonus. 'All I'll get when I'm discharged is a few coins.' Often workers were injured on duty and had to be in the hospitals for months without any wages from the employers.<sup>43</sup> Most of all this worker was appalled by the inhumanity of social relations in the DSLSC: there was not one day of work in which a supervisor had said the work had been well done, although they were always shouting that the goods had to be handled with care. Another winchman argued that he was doing the work of two men ('a double job') both operating the crane and the winch as well as doing the signalling work of the gangwayman. This was the grievance of all of the winchmen. As an operator, the winchmen immediately compared their position with that of the white crane drivers on the wharves and argued they should be paid the same wage. The African workers had the same necessities as white workers. 'When I am at the

winch I can get the cars out of the ship without damage and I do the same job as the white crane driver, but he is higher paid. I have the same expenses, I stay at Kwa Mashu where the rent is high, my children want to get a good education, all people must be dressed, eat, and be satisfied, and now even the bus fares are being increased.'

The infusion of Point workers with a clear grasp of the issues of the workers' struggle into the stevedoring meeting quickened the pace of debate and raised the workers' hopes for an organized strategy. A leading Grindrod worker said he was happy to see that the indunas at the Point were coming forward to assist the workers to become organized because 'the workers fear the indunas may inform the bosses' as in the case of the worker who had been warned he was to be dismissed. 'We must now be confident to proceed with our organization.' The reason, he argued, that the GFWBF stevedoring group had not grown was because the indunas had dragged behind the workers. 'We will now be very strong as most of the workers were afraid there would be informers at the meetings.' He felt that since the indunas also had grievances they could advance with the workers as a whole. Other workers agreed the indunas had grievances but called on them not to 'force the workers' because they simply earned a wage from what the labourers produced. One worker suggested the indunas should be united with the workers on the basis of not dismissing the workers.

The stronger presence of the DSLSC workers immediately brought up the idea of setting up a joint committee of DSLSC and Grindrod workers, to 'speak with one voice'. One of the Grindrod workers suggested that the Point even had some advantages, for instance they had separate pay slips for basic wages and overtime. If there were sufficient workers coming to the meetings representatives could be elected from the DSLSC to the stevedoring committee. The problem raised by one of the Point workers was that there were informers at the meeting as the DSLSC office knew he had

a say in its organization, and this meant that the workers could never be strong. The only way around this problem, a Grindrod worker suggested, was that there should be discussions with the DSLSC workers at the lunch breaks.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the setbacks faced by the workers, with the victimization of some of them after the Wage Board sitting and the threat of worse to come, the GFWBF stevedoring section was growing steadily in influence and in numbers. Although the presence of the Point workers seemed to indicate a general forward movement in the organization, the officials were far from getting near the structured organization they were wanting: groups of workers in production electing delegates who in turn would elect an executive committee to take policy on all questions affecting the organization of stevedoring workers. These problems were not in any sense related to the incapacity of the workers for organization but to the pervasive fear of the workers. This fear (the word 'fear' or 'afraid' appears on every page of the minutes of the meetings) was complex; it was not simply the risk of African workers organizing semi-legally under an oppressive state. The nature of fear of the African workers gives some insight into the division of labour between the employers and the state in maintaining the social order of capital. The power of the state to inflict decisive blows against individual workers and the workers' organization was not the dominant fear: the state in the view of the workers acted as a 'reserve power' of the employers. Management took on the prime responsibility for maintaining control over the workers on a day-to-day basis, the police only being called in when the authority of capital at the workplace was being threatened by a rising tide of resistance, as during a strike. The task of management was to make profits through the exertion of social controls over the workers, that of the police to maintain the public order of capital. An over-dependence of the employers on the police would indicate its incapacity to organize and rule production.

The primary fear of the workers was that of instant dismissal, from which the workers were far from immune by collective action in their support by other workers or by the industrial rights strategy of the GFWBF. Without organization there was not likely to be the possibility of collective support or even a concerted legal battle over victimization. The only way the workers could break out of the cycle of fear of taking the first step to becoming organized because of insufficient organization was to be a general forward movement of the workers in support of their demands. The difficulty in a period when the workers were cautiously advancing was that they had to commit themselves to an untested course of action in which leading workers could only be safeguarded by its success. Despite the oppression of the workers by the apartheid state and the employers, a common resistance to this oppression did not engender united working class action of its own accord. The fear of the advanced workers in providing a decisive lead in organization was both a product of the informer and spy system used by the employers to 'mark' the leaders and the relative openness of the meetings.<sup>45</sup> The operations of the state in maintaining the public order of capital, particularly in the townships, in political organizations, and in enforcing a night curfew, were not the primary fears of the advanced workers in discussing working class organization in production, although these were the impediments to general resistance to the apartheid state.

The general questions of organization which were being faced with increasing urgency by the workers were supplemented by the decisive issue of the changing hours in the docks. The issue was complicated for the GFWBF officials as it did not necessarily involve an actual decline in the total number of hours worked a week, but rather adjustments to the definition of ordinary hours and the elimination of rest periods. For the workers, the issue was simple: the total amount of overtime was being cut and earnings reduced. It was the issue of hours which provided a sharp stimulus to the membership of the GFWBF stevedoring section and added to the numbers

attending the meetings. It also brought about a close study of the possibility of organizing a workers' committee registered in terms of the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act at Grindrods to turn the arbitrary re-organization of the hours into a legal dispute with the employers. This was finally the question which brought the wage issue to the forefront again and brought the stevedores out on strike.

The most substantial changes in hours at the docks had been made on 6 December 1971 when the 'five-day' week had been introduced.<sup>46</sup> Coming soon after the demand for increased wages by the stevedores in September, the abolition of work on Saturdays was a concession to the workers' demands for shorter hours as well as an attempt to step up the intensity of work. The loss of 4 hours 40 minutes work on Saturday was transferred on to the working hours Monday to Friday, simply by expanding the proportion of the 12 hour 20 minute maximum hours regarded as ordinary hours.<sup>47</sup> Thus the workers lost one hour's work a day, between 1700 and 1800, overtime. This, it was calculated, could lose the workers from R20 upwards a month. There was an added benefit to the employers: before the 'five day' week it was reported that work started to slacken off from about 1615 for the end of the working day at 1700 when there was a meal break before overtime began. This was not only a benefit to the stevedoring employers, but to the commercial and transport companies as well. 'Now that the harbour working day ends at 1800 harbour carriers are finding it possible to continue normal working until the end of their working day at 1700 — a gain of nearly an hour each day.'<sup>48</sup> The shipping companies were apparently not satisfied with the rearrangements and advocated a starting time of 0700, and after its implementation commercial companies argued that it would be essential to return to Saturday work to avoid congestion after the annual holiday. This would not be regarded as overtime, they complained, and would be very expensive. The difficulty with reinstating Saturday work was that the workers had become used to this increase in their leisure time

and the employers would find it difficult to take it away from them.

The first news about further changes in the hours of work came from the Grindrod workers, where a meeting of the workers was addressed by Neaves, the compound manager, late in September. Neaves apparently told the workers that in the future they would be required to start work at 0700 and continue through to 1700 with a break for lunch but no more tea breaks during the day. Overtime would continue as before to 2100. The workers had resisted these new conditions of service despite Neaves' arguing this would mean a reduction in ordinary time to 45 hours; the workers demanded 44 hours and no change in the tea breaks.<sup>49</sup> The workers did not find the return to the end of the 'ordinary' working hours at 1700 attractive, even if they would have 3 hours 20 minutes more overtime.<sup>50</sup> The changes in hours would require that they start promptly at 0700; the workers would have to clock in at 0630. The intention of the employers must have been to get more out of the labourers while they were still fresh and generally to raise the intensity of labour throughout the day. Earlier in the year it had been reported that the 'five day' week had caused productivity of the workers to drop at a time when the port had not been under heavy pressure. The shipping companies were concerned that the 'humanitarian principle' involved in shortening hours by ending Saturday work would not be able to be made up during the rest of the week. Once the 'five day' week had been introduced it could 'never be withdrawn without upsetting the harbour workers'. The shipping companies were also concerned that ships which were unable to be completely loaded or discharged on Friday would be forced to remain in port until Sunday.<sup>51</sup>

The Grindrod workers were strongly opposed to the new hours suggested by Neaves. 'We are crying because there is no compound and we have to use the train. When we are late we will be fired. It is very hard to get to work at 0600.'<sup>52</sup> The changed hours proposed raised all the

workers' grievances about working conditions. At the end of the week, one worker said, there was a note on the worker's ticket instructing him he had to work on Saturday, so the 'five day' week was a myth. If you did not come to work on Saturday you were fired. With the juggling around of the hours the workers were concerned what effect this would have on their hourly earnings; there were no pay slips to show precisely how many hours were worked.

The change in hours presented the GFWBF officials with a decisive challenge: here was an issue which aroused the widest unity of all workers against the employers. If it was handled correctly it could establish the GFWBF stevedoring section as a mass organization of workers in the docks, being able to put forward all the demands of the stevedores. There were two possibilities: either a mass agitational campaign against the hours under the imprint of some other organization, or the establishment of effective workers' committees in the companies which would be in an unassailable position. The first alternative was not given serious consideration as the workers were already thoroughly aroused against the new system and so the only strategy could be to call them out on strike, a forward position which would not necessarily be supported by leading workers in the GFWBF. The other alternative involved a study of the works committee system in terms of the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act as a means by which the workers could declare a dispute without jeopardizing the position of their leaders.<sup>53</sup> The workers were unenthusiastic about establishing a works committee at Grindrods. They said a committee had been in existence some time ago with 11 representatives, but all (bar one) had been fired during an argument about whether they should have a copy of the wage determination. In the discussion it was established that this committee had not been registered at all. It had apparently been established on the initiative of Mr. Grindrod, the managing director of the company, and Neaves had said the works committee 'didn't need the law'. The GFWBF officials would have

preferred to have had such a strong representation of Grindrod workers within the organization that the workers could have demanded recognition from the employers as an autonomous and representative organization, but given the fact that only a minority of the workers had joined the organization by that time, they suggested that the workers should fight for a representative committee registered in terms of the Act which could be led by GFWBF members. If possible the elections should take place at the GFWBF premises and the employers merely notified that the representatives had been elected and that they were legally safeguarded in terms of the Act. After some discussion it was agreed that the GFWBF officials should write to the Department of Labour and ask the officials to make an inspection of the conditions of work; the workers would consider whether it was advisable to set up a registered works committee.<sup>54</sup>

While the workers were hesitant about going ahead and electing a works committee, the Grindrod management (possibly stimulated by a visit from the Department of Labour) was most concerned that a committee should be constituted. A meeting of the Grindrod workers was held on Friday, 29 September 1972, at which the workers were addressed by Neaves, who asked one of the long service workers to get six other workers to set up a committee. The workers, however, refused to put forward representatives if the committee would suffer the same fate as the earlier committee, whose members had been victimized, and insisted the committee should be registered. The workers reserved their position, but by Friday, 6 October 1972, had decided to go ahead with elections for a works committee if it was to be registered in terms of the Act.<sup>55</sup>

With every meeting of the workers the issue of the working hours became more urgent, particularly for Grindrod workers who saw the new hours as a definite extension of working time and creating the possibility for more dismissals. The issue was slower to develop with the DSLSC workers,

possibly because fewer leading workers attended the meetings of the GFWBF, and the management was not prepared to risk having meetings of the workers as at Grindrods. As the dispute developed, there was a distinct tendency for the Grindrod workers to sharpen their hostility to the new hours while the DSLSC workers struggled to get a deeper level of organization without jeopardizing the security of the leadership. The question of changed hours, particularly an earlier reporting time, was a burning question for the Grindrod workers living in the townships around Durban and faced with an inefficient transport system. The disadvantages may not have seemed so acute to the majority of DSLSC workers housed in a compound who were woken early in the morning and started to report for work from 0600 in the morning. The problems in effective joint organization of the stevedoring workers as a whole were made difficult both by the fact that the Grindrod workers spent only short work breaks together with the DSLSC workers, and the leading Grindrod workers did not know who among the DSLSC workers to trust. For the GFWBF officials the Point workers were more remote (the offices in Gale Street were a considerable distance from the Point) and there were even problems in some Point workers finding the premises.

Worst of all for the DSLSC workers was the reappearance of J. B. Buthelezi as a figure of authority. Quite what had happened in the period between his reported removal and his re-emergence, a period of six weeks, is not clear.<sup>56</sup> It may well have been that he had seen the Paramount Chief, as one of the older workers reported, and had been rebuked for his repression of the workers. It is extraordinary that Buthelezi should have been absent from the Company during a crucial period of its control over the workers and that the 'frightful' policies of both the DSLSC and Grindrods had been blunted. The DSLSC management seems to have been steeling itself against expected strike action by 'marking' leading workers and employing more sophisticated techniques of victimization. What is certain is that in the period up to the Wage Board sitting in July 1972 there had been increased

employment of workers from Nongoma, the Paramount Chief's district, and a spectacular increase in the number of workers from Mahlabathini, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's district. What type of plans which the DSLSC management must have been making in readiness for the almost inevitable strike after the Wage Board recommendations (which the management was well aware would nowhere approach R18) cannot be developed, but in the tradition of the past it must have been considering its labour hinterland.<sup>57</sup>

The reappearance of J.B. Buthelezi dismayed the Point workers. 'He is still there, better send him away. I repeat we don't want him here.' Another worker said he had heard that he was to have been removed but now he had returned the workers were outraged, even though he was reported to have stopped sacking workers as before. Despite this there was some tightening of control, especially in pride in the company. Workers who took off their hardhats at work because it was very hot were being dismissed; even the white foremen were reported to have said this was ridiculous.<sup>58</sup>

Neither the workers (the worker who had reported so authoritatively on the subject was on leave) nor the GFWBF drew on the case of J.B. Buthelezi's reappearance as an example of the incapacity or unwillingness of the traditional African leadership collaborating with the apartheid to secure the defence of the workers even against other African collaborators. To the contrary, some of the Point workers demanded that Chief Gatsha Buthelezi should be asked to 'exclude' J.B. Buthelezi.

The GFWBF officials did not want to oppose this development if it would give the workers the chance of having a 'legitimate' mass meeting which could be used to consolidate the GFWBF and put forward fighting demands as well as secure the removal of J.B. Buthelezi. A strike now seemed to be inevitable, both because of the delay in the Wage Board making a recommendation and the unpopular changes in hours, but the important question was the timing and effectiveness of strike action. Although the meetings were growing in numbers and membership was rising, there was no

effective organization at the point of production and it was impossible to develop an authoritative strategy for the DSLSC workers. The GFWBF officials proposed a double strategy: the drawing up of a 'Dockers' Charter' which would put forward all the essential demands of the workers and potentially become the basis for national mobilization, and writing a letter to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to address a mass meeting of stevedoring workers.<sup>59</sup> The Charter was to be drawn up by the GFWBF officials from the complaints of the workers to be discussed and agreed upon by the workers, and then form the basis for workers' demands for the future.

Although the invitation to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi had been first suggested at a meeting of the workers on 25 August 1972 for a different purpose, to strengthen the basis for the stevedoring committee, the demand being put forward by the Point workers seemed solely to remove J.B. Buthelezi. The GFWBF officials had not been completely remiss in carrying out the agreement of the meeting, but the relations with Chief Buthelezi were being considered on the basis of the interests of the benefit fund as a whole. It might be possible to have a really enormous meeting of workers, including the stevedoring workers, which would transform the organization into a mass movement of workers with fighting demands, they argued. A memorandum on the benefit fund was drawn up detailing its membership from different industries and outlining its possible future development. This was sent to Chief Buthelezi and one of the officials telephoned him to ask if he could discuss the benefit fund with him.<sup>60</sup> A meeting was politely declined. When this was mentioned to the stevedoring workers they insisted that a letter should be written which should require a speedy response. The workers hoped that Chief Buthelezi would frighten the indunas. 'It would be good for Buthelezi to be here because the indunas are giving trouble and they will be scared when they see him.'<sup>61</sup> Before the meeting ended on Saturday, 7 October 1972, this letter was written and signed by two workers from Grindrods and two from the Point, calling on Chief Buthelezi to address a

meeting of the stevedores in Durban as soon as possible. The letter spelt out some of the concrete problems of the stevedores.

For many years we stevedoring workers have been struggling for better wages and working conditions. Because of our actions we have been victimized and we are not allowed to organize ourselves into freely elected committees. We have a special problem at the Point where the compound manager, Mr. J.B. Buthelezi, is firing workers for no reason at all, and who is against workers asking for higher wages.<sup>62</sup>

The answer to this letter calling on Chief Buthelezi to support the workers' demands for free organization and the removal of J.B. Buthelezi was fairly swift: the workers were redirected to B.I. Dladla, the KwaZulu official in charge of community affairs.<sup>63</sup> The officials and workers who were consulted about this response regarded they had been 'fobbed off' by Chief Buthelezi, although unsuccessful attempts were made to get in touch by telephone or telegram with B.I. Dladla. The collaborative African petty bourgeoisie, so freely available to meetings of overseas academics, churches, and businessmen, were being faced with the contradictions of their position — an unwillingness to confront the workers whose exploitation contributed to their income. For Chief Buthelezi the stevedores' resistance was also focusing attention on his precise relationship with his paternal uncle, was he tolerating the oppression of the workers by someone who spoke so authoritatively of 'our government', the KwaZulu Bantustan regime?<sup>64</sup>

The strategy of getting a mass meeting of stevedores around a personage of immunity having failed, the workers were compelled to move into a period of sharp struggle without a clear strategy. The contact between the GFWBF officials and Grindrod workers with the DSLSC workers became tenuous under the strain of the evident weakness of collective action (the reappearance of the 'absolutist' J.B. Buthelezi) and the counter-pressures on the Grindrod workers to agree to the new hours of work.<sup>65</sup> In the absence of an authoritative presence of DSLSC workers at the meetings it was difficult for

the GFWBF officials to gauge how importantly they regarded the change in hours, or whether the strategy of demanding a works committee in terms of the Act would have secured a tactical advantage to the workers in legally rejecting the new conditions of service. The crisis over the change in hours brought out all the weaknesses of the GFWBF organization, its lack of support from the depths of the workers' resistance at the Point, and its inability to coordinate agitation on the complete spectrum of demands being made by the stevedoring workers. In particular, the pressing needs of the moment tended to obscure the long-term objectives of the workers' organization and the 'Dockers' Charter', which would have presented the employers, the state, and other workers, with a commanding document of the workers' aspirations, was not produced.

The workers under the most immediate pressure to agree to the new conditions of service were the Grindrod workers; there was not the same degree of immediate antagonism at the Point. The DSLSC workers were merely told they would have to be ready to sign on for work from 0600, to have received their tasks at 0630, and start work at 0700. An announcement of these rearrangements was made on Friday, 13 October 1972, and the workers asked when they were to receive their pay increases. The workers were then dispersed.<sup>66</sup> The Grindrod workers were fiercely opposed to the new hours, and their opposition took on the form of a prolonged struggle against management, and one which is still unresolved because of the historic nature of the backpay claim.

For the Grindrod workers, living in the townships around Durban, the new hours posed a direct threat to their job security and even as a means of extending the hours worked. These workers argued they were exhausted by the long hours, and the changes did not mean any improvement at all. Their day started before 0400 when they would have to leave their homes to get the trains into Durban. They then arrived at 0500 or 0530 and had

time to get some food and to report for work.<sup>67</sup> They changed into their overalls and waited for transport. At 0630 no more workers were allowed to report. 'When you are not in your overall at that time the indunas chase you and say you are late. You are not allowed to be in the queue to report present when you are not in your overall.' After completing overtime and having had a shower the workers were only ready to get the trains home from 2040, and by the time they got into the townships there were no buses to get them home. Often the trains were late and the workers got less than five hours sleep, after more than twelve hours hard manual work.

The appearance of the Department of Labour officials at the company premises on Friday, 13 October 1972, brought the hostility of the workers into the open. They rejected the new hours, demanded to see the 'owner' of the company, M. Grindrod, and told the worker who rang the work bell not to ring out the new times. The Department of Labour officials, A. van Heerden, the Assistant Divisional Inspector of Labour, and P. van der Merwe, the Bantu Labour Officer, made little attempt to be impartial in the dispute and their 'conciliation' was repudiated by the workers who demanded to see the managing director.<sup>68</sup> The officials took down the company numbers of the workers who spoke, 'and that made them frightened they may be fired at any time'. Two meetings took place: the first between management and the workers from 1130 and the second from 1300. Between 1130 and 1400 there was a work stoppage as the Grindrod workers argued with management and the Department of Labour, and a return to work was only achieved by threats of dismissals. At the beginning of the meeting management announced the new hours and offered some concessions: the workers were offered beer in the canteen, an extra R0.25 for the workers at Shed 13 who handled the heavy rolls of paper and drums, and a special bus if the workers were required to work up to 2200. The workers refused to accept the new hours and said they would not start work at 0630 on Monday, 16 October 1972,

they would still adhere to the old conditions of work. The workers demanded to know how many hours were to be worked a day, but there was no direct answer.<sup>69</sup> The workers said they would have to work 9 hours 30 minutes ordinary time with the new hours; this totalled 47 hours 30 minutes a week ordinary time: where was the 45 hour week? After a long argument, van der Merwe said that the government required the workers to elect a committee because it was essential that work should not be stopped. The workers replied that they were afraid to elect a committee as the representatives would all be victimized. Van der Merwe gave his personal guarantee that the members would be safeguarded, but then said that the workers should go back to work even though they had grievances because they would otherwise be dismissed. The workers were angered by these threats and by their company numbers being taken, but went back to work.

On Monday, 16 October 1972, it seems as though the workers arrived early and were again addressed by the Department of Labour officials who said that the new hours had to be adhered to. Van der Merwe advised the workers to report at 0630 and said they should wait for a meeting with the managing director, M. Grindrod, on 23 October. He again suggested that the workers should elect spokesmen and that the other workers should go to the ships. The workers refused to elect a committee and demanded a thorough explanation of the new system of ordinary and over time. This discussion was cut short when van der Merwe said that if they did not agree to the new conditions 'our children will suffer because we will be fired'.<sup>70</sup> Both the management and Department of Labour officials continued to insist that the workers bring forward their leaders and write down their grievances. While it had been suggested by the GFWBF officials that the workers could strengthen their case by forming a works committee in terms of the Act and making a formal dispute of the new hours, the leaders felt the formal guarantees against victimization were insufficient. Hadn't their company

numbers been taken down by officials at the work stoppage on Friday? On Friday, 20 October 1972, Neave reportedly got a clerk to summons some of the leading workers to write him a letter containing their grievances, but the workers said 'with one voice' they would not do so. The clerk said that if the workers did not write down their grievances he would say they were satisfied.<sup>71</sup> The workers insisted rather that the managing director be brought before them before they put forward all their demands. The unanimous rejection of the documentation of the workers' demands was both a defensive strategy (the leading workers would be expected to sign the letter) and a way of dividing management; why should they deal with the compound manager when it was the managing director who made the decisions? They also felt that Neaves could not be trusted to write down everything they said exactly as they wanted.<sup>72</sup> Among some of the older workers there was a belief that the distant patriarchal figure of M. Grindrod could intervene in a more sympathetic manner than the lower levels of management or the Department of Labour. This belief did not persist long as he had a technique of 'being in conference' for extended periods when the workers' demands were at their height.

Despite the unanimity of the workers in pursuing a definite course of action at Grindrods there were severe limitations in their actions for the united action of all stevedoring workers. The workers had accepted the new hours as suggested by van der Merwe before the proposed meeting on 23 October, and thus had nothing in hand apart from a threat to strike in the future. The vigorous protests against the change in hours had not been linked, as at the Point, with the demand for a general increase in wages. If the workers had decided, it could have been possible for the GFWBF to have given wide publicity to their demands and to make the connection with the DSLSC workers. The Assistant Divisional Inspector of Labour was able to say in the local press: 'There is no difficulty in the docks at this stage and there has been no formal request to declare a dispute.'<sup>73</sup>

In short, the workers had lost the initiative in taking immediate strike action in response to the changed hours imposed on 16 October 1972.

### Strike at Point and workers' demands

With the possibility of united action against the new hours having receded with the workers provisionally accepting the new conditions of service by not resisting them in strike action, the Point workers were to move into action on their own. On the Saturday after the new hours had been implemented the DSLSC representatives at the stevedoring meeting showed a rising resentment against the new system, although the meeting was largely dominated by discussion of strategy at Grindrods. The DSLSC workers argued they had not been given any opportunity of voicing their opinion on the new hours, 'we were only instructed that these were the new conditions'. The delegates could not explain why the workers had accepted the new hours rather than resisting them, they had simply dispersed. They complained there was no longer a tea break or meal break in the new hours and that the workers had to work right through from 1330 to 2000 without a break, a period of 6 hours 30 minutes hard manual work.<sup>74</sup> The workers now had to have tea before starting work in the morning. Calculating the losses in tea and meal breaks and the earlier reporting time, the workers insisted 'we are not being paid for an extra hour a day'. This insight into the changed hours of work reflected the deepening of resistance to the new conditions and the close reasoning of the DSLSC workers; it was these arguments which were to form the basis for a prolonged dispute with the management at Grindrods.<sup>75</sup>

The changed hours represented an attempt by employers in the docks to raise both the amount of labour time on Monday to Friday and on Sunday, and to increase the intensity of labour. With the revised hours the employers hoped to 'regain working time in the harbour' lost by abolishing Saturday work.<sup>76</sup> Saturday working would be done only in 'very excep-

tional' circumstances and by prior arrangement with the SARH. (Despite these assurances the workers complained continually that some gangs were being required to report for work on Saturday.) The changed hours would not affect the exports of raw materials from South Africa or the import of alumina; the Bluff coaling appliance, the grain elevator, the manganese plant, sugar terminal and Island View berths would continue to work each Saturday from 0700 to 1140. The concession to the workers in terms of granting a 'free' day was limited to general cargo at other areas. The emphasis of the employers was now on raising the output of the workers in the early hours of the day while they were still fresh and on cutting the 'stop-start' problems of tea and meal breaks which tended to slow production for longer than the set breaks. The harbour administration claimed that the new schedule had been adopted 'after consultation with all interested parties', presumably meaning the shipping, stevedoring, and commercial companies, but certainly not including the workers who would be expected to carry them out.

The hours were particularly advantageous to the employers. Work started earlier (the workers reported that they were expected to start working as soon as they arrived at the ships, often at 0650) and by cutting out the tea and meal breaks this meant they could even gain a few minutes extra, quite apart from keeping up a steady pace of work throughout the day, broken only by the lunch hour.<sup>77</sup> The only possible advantage to the workers in the new hours could be the earlier ending time at 2000, which was only possible because of the earlier starting time. The workers were most angry about the removal of the tea and meal rest periods, and without a wage increase to correspond to the tightened and extended hours regarded the new hours as extracting additional labour-time from the workers and bringing an increase in unpaid labour.<sup>78</sup>

The matter came to a head on Friday, 20 October 1972, which was also the day the Natal Mercury reported on the dispute over hours at Grindrods. At a meeting of the GFWBF stevedoring workers on Saturday, 21 October 1972, the DSLSC representatives said that on Monday they would demand to see the manager because with the new hours the work was 'too heavy'. The conditions of service of the DSLSC which were pinned to the notice board which provided for a meal break at the end of ordinary hours, were not in complete contradiction to the conditions at work. 'The meal time is now taken away but they want to say there is not enough money for overtime. That is why we want to see the manager.' A week after the Grindrod workers, the workers at the Point were facing their employers with the same demands.

When it came the strike was more a demonstration of the workers' strength and demands than a decisive struggle. It was, however, a celebration of the exploited: the strikers shouting down Dreyer, manager of the DSLSC, providing the liberal press with their precise demands, and confronting the police. The demands which had been put forward in the underground letter from the labourers, and the grievances which had been discussed at meetings Saturday after Saturday, were carried extensively in the newspaper columns, and Dreyer questioned closely about the whole range of working conditions at the DSLSC. All the reporting of the strike, however, mystified the position of J. B. Buthelezi and misinterpreted the workers' call for Buthelezi as a request for Chief Gatsha Buthelezi to intervene on their behalf.<sup>79</sup> The initiative which the GFWBF could have had in presenting an authoritative set of fighting demands which could have drawn all the stevedoring workers together and attracted the support of other workers in Durban and elsewhere was lost. The strike had its limitations in not gaining anything for the workers, being spontaneous, and not able to be sustained. A comparison could be made with the prolonged protest against the changed hours by workers in Cape Town which started on Tuesday, 24 October 1972,

by the workers refusing to work overtime. The two forms of collective action were obviously related, and both were forms of pressure against the employers and the Wage Board. In neither cases were the workers defeated by the employers and the state, and showed their readiness to take further collective action in the future.

The strike on Monday, 23 October 1972, immediately brought work in Durban harbour to a standstill, immobilizing about 20 ships. As indicated by the DSLSC representatives at the stevedoring workers' meeting on Saturday, the workers did not immediately put forward their demands, but demanded that Dreyer provide an explanation of the new conditions of service. Dreyer appealed to the workers to return to work when he addressed the workers from a balcony in the compound. He asked that he be allowed to negotiate with a few spokesmen for the strikers, but there were angry shouts from the assembled workers: 'We will be fired. We will be fired.' There was a heated reaction from the workers when Dreyer did not answer a questioner who asked how many times the African dock workers had gone on strike for higher wages without being granted increases. Amid loud shouting, he eventually told the workers that the Wage Board made recommendations on wages and that the final decision rested with the Minister of Labour. The workers then wanted to know why it was taking the Wage Board so long to decide, since it had heard evidence in July. Dreyer replied that the workers would all have a chance to object to a possible determination by the Wage Board once its recommendation was published in the Government Gazette. But this was greeted with jeers and shouts: 'We will not go back to work until we are paid R18 a week.' Several workers challenged Dreyer to say how he would bring up a family on a wage of R8 a week. Why had their wages not been increased when the working hours were lengthened on 16 October? Dreyer said that the SARH controlled the working hours, but the workers rejected this explanation, arguing: 'If they fix the working hours, why don't they pay us?'

The workers demanded to know why there were no wage slips inside their wage packets and why these were given to the workers open. They angrily demanded to know why the indunas were paid so much more when they did much less work than the labourers. On several occasions they called for J.B. Buthelezi to be brought before them: 'Where is Buthelezi? Bring Buthelezi.' Judiciously, the man variously described as 'compound manager', 'Bantu liaison officer', or 'chief induna', kept well away from the scene of the strike.

The workers' grievances and demands expressed at the meetings held during the day and to the press ranged widely from industrial demands to grievances about their conditions in the DSLSC compound. The workers demanded R18 a week, voluntary overtime, shorter working hours, and complained their living conditions were inadequate and unhygienic. They did not know how much was deducted from their wages each week for income tax and compound fees as there was no payslip. They rejected completely the handling of their grievances by the indunas who were not interested in their welfare. Some of the workers only received R6 leave pay a year, and there was no sick pay even when they were put off work by a company doctor.<sup>80</sup> Some of the demands made to the press covered areas which were not generally discussed at the GFWBF stevedoring meetings. Many of the workers said that there were not enough bunks in the compounds and they had to sleep on the floor. The bunks were cramped together and they had to sleep on planks. The compounds were riddled with bed bugs. The workers also complained the food served to them was not fit to eat and that the beer was diluted with water.<sup>81</sup>

Between the meetings held inside the compound between the workers and Dreyer and with the Department of Labour it was possible to discuss the strategy of the strike. The workers broke up into beer drinking groups, singing songs about the strike, and keeping up an atmosphere of resistance.

Some of the strikers said they were demonstrating through their strike the unity of the black oppressed in South Africa. A group of strikers with whom there were discussions said that J. B. Buthelezi would not be coming out of his offices that day because he would be killed. 'He is always standing like a god at the gates, but look today. Where is he? He will die if only we can find him in the street.' The lebandla<sup>82</sup> was approached by a group of indunas and one of the labourers mockingly asked them whether they were also on strike. A discussion started about black supervisors as another striker said: 'Where do you come from, have you ever seen indunas in any business in our country go on strike?' Some felt that the strikers had nothing against the indunas although they did nothing about taking up the grievances of the workers with J. B. Buthelezi, whom they feared. A striker vigorously denounced Buthelezi as one who had the power of dismissing workers and who kept telegrams away from the workers when they were being told of the death of a close relative. 'When we try to get permission from him to go and bury them he asks us if we are going to raise them from the dead. If we want to go to the funeral he tells us to go for ever and not come back.' The indunas themselves lived in fear of being dismissed for bringing complaints or being demoted. He argued the workers had nothing against the indunas, gave one a hug and asked him for a shilling to buy more beer. This was given willingly and the discussion moved to other topics. Throughout the afternoon there were rumours of meetings, and towards the late afternoon, the stevedores were increasingly angry that the meetings were being postponed. An attempt was made to arrest a striker by the South African Police, but when they were threatened with violence the prisoner was released. Squad cars were brought in to block the streets around the DSLSC compound, but then removed. The strike did not end with a violent confrontation with the police, however, as the unity of the workers seems to have become strained during Monday night, and the strike dissolved on the following day.

Dreyer delivered an ultimatum to the strikers on Tuesday, 24 October 1972, either to accept that the Wage Board would be making a recommendation which would increase wages in the future, or to collect their wages and leave. A large contingent of armed police with riot sticks backed the threat to dismiss the workers.<sup>83</sup> In the face of such formidable and obvious power and growing disunity, the workers returned to work at about 1100. Some of the workers blamed the disunity of the workers on a 'tsotsi' element who were brave in defying the police on Monday, but had become scared before the rest on Tuesday, and had led the move to go back to work. Despite some recriminations because of the lack of success in achieving any of their demands, the workers were in a confident mood and determined to organize themselves for the coming struggles over the Wage Board recommendation. The overwhelming majority of the workers returned to work determined to continue the struggle, although it was reported that 14 workers decided to leave the company.

The stevedores' strike was one of the most important in the increasing resistance of the African workers to poverty wages and their subordination within the apartheid economy. In the context of the mass strikes which followed, the forward movement of the stevedoring workers raised the demands and slogans which were to unify tens of thousands of African workers in the future. The strike also demonstrated how popular agitation such as conducted by the Wages Commission could heighten the consciousness of strategic groups of workers and reinforce the militants within the African working class. It also showed quite forcibly how the African working class was to engage in a struggle with employers and the apartheid state quite independently from the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie, which in turn was faced with the problems of either to be seen to oppose the strike movement or to develop its own political alliances. The exchanges between Dreyer and the workers demonstrated convincingly a higher level of class consciousness than in the 1960s: workers successfully rebutting

the arguments of management and putting in their place the demands of the workers. While the employers' response used the language of formality and legality, the workers' arguments were based on the real and material, attempting to reach the core of the argument. The strike had been settled by the use of social and political power. In the words of a Wages Commission statement:

Force has resolved the issues for the present. The underlying causes remain — workers dissatisfied with very real conditions: long hours, low wages, hard and dangerous work, and separation from families.<sup>84</sup>

It is argued that it would be impossible to establish a works committee at the Point when genuine leadership quite rightly feared victimization. Since the workers both at the DSLSC and Grindrods were vigorously opposed to electing representatives openly to face management, the GFWBF officials felt that the stevedoring section of the benefit fund would be immensely strengthened to the point where the workers could demand that negotiations take place through the benefit fund.

### Resistance and organization

The strike of workers at the Point and the stoppage at Grindrods seemed to give the GFWBF as a workers' organization new possibilities to become fully representative of the stevedoring workers and to be able to lead their struggles as a permanent organization of workers. The workers who had openly defied the armed police and forcefully countered the arguments of the employers and the Department of Labour could be expected to join a semi-legal workers' organization en masse; while the example of the Cape Town stevedoring workers in banning overtime work without being dismissed also pointed to methods of adopting a variety of methods of resistance to the employers which could be coordinated through various levels of organization through the GFWBF. If the fear of the workers had been

overcome through taking strike action, then there would be unlimited prospects for united working class organization and collective action. The basic optimism of the GFWBF officials came from the understanding that the workers learnt to organize by taking strike action, that it transformed their consciousness, and would create an immediate impetus for class organization. As Lenin has argued:

Strikes ... teach the workers to unite; they show them that they can struggle against the capitalist 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 the 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.<sup>85</sup>

The problem was how to sustain such a level of consciousness and build the instruments of future struggles when the employers and the state were also drawing the lesson that the rising struggles of the workers had to be dampened through strategic reforms and more intelligent repression. In the aftermath of the Point strike the counter action by the employers, the Department of Labour, and the Security Police, only became clear in the struggle to create a mass and democratic dock workers' organization.

The first meeting of the GFWBF stevedoring group, held eleven days after the Point strike had ended, was an attempt to carry through the workers' militancy immediately into organization. One of the GFWBF officials presented the details of the overtime ban by stevedores in Cape Town and argued that the stevedoring workers in South Africa were becoming united in their demands and action.<sup>86</sup> 'As soon as the Wage Board recommendation comes through a meeting of workers must be held to demand R18.00. The workers must be well prepared and the committee of workers ready for action.' Having had an ancillary part in the struggles at the Point, and

fearing that the future struggles of the workers could lapse into autonomous resistance at each company, rather than united class action, the officials were determined that open or secret action through the GFWBF should be taken to reject the recommendations of the Wage Board and lead the workers' resistance. Facing the prospect of a decisive struggle rather than a demonstration of strength, the GFWBF officials insisted that the delegates present take more active steps to increase the GFWBF membership decisively to turn it into a mass organization. If every stevedore was a member then the employers could not single out the leading workers for victimization and the meetings could take representative and democratic decisions binding on all workers in the forthcoming struggles. The discussions were increasingly urgent, and the delegates even criticized for not making concerted attempts to win over whole gangs of workers to the GFWBF which could constitute the nucleus of the workers' organization in production. The officials were deeply conscious that the leadership of the strike at the Point came from the labourers who drew up the underground document for the Wage Board and it was this militant strata which was not effectively being represented at the meetings.<sup>87</sup> The discussions had tended to become dominated by sympathetic indunas (many of whom took a lead in joining the GFWBF and provided invaluable 'industrial' knowledge to the group but who were totally incapable of working class leadership) and the winchmen who possessed similar qualities but did not express the radical combativity of the 'underground' voice of the DSLSC labourers. With a larger membership the organization would both reach into the deep pools of resistance among the stevedores and allow the labourers' demands and militancy to dominate the meetings. The GFWBF officials continued to attempt to get B.I. Dladla, executive councillor for community affairs of KwaZulu Bantustan, to address a mass meeting of stevedores to enable the workers to have a platform for the widest and freest discussion among the workers before the recommendations of the Wage Board were announced. An express letter, telegrams, and phone calls elicited no response.

It cannot be established from the minutes of 4 November 1972 whether the Grindrod workers acted jointly in taking strike action with the Point workers although there must have been a stoppage as the workers were expecting to hear from M. Grindrod on Monday, 23 October. Evidently he was not at the company premises on that day, but a works committee was elected that week to discuss the new hours and other problems.<sup>88</sup> The workers were told that M. Grindrod was not immediately available but that he would meet with the workers after 30 days and give the works committee members letters authorizing them to handle the complaints of the workers. By 4 November this had not been done. The works committee was composed of 2 indunas, 4 gangwaymen/winchemen, 5 labourers, and 1 fork-lift truck driver, with Neaves as the chairman and a clerk as the secretary.<sup>89</sup> The works committee was to meet on every Monday at 0800 and would be allowed to discuss all issues relating to wages and working conditions, and the delegates said they were 'happy' with the committee. All representatives on the works committee were members of the GFWBF. The strength of the benefit fund on the works committee only made its weakness more evident among the mass of workers. Of the some 600 workers employed at Grindrods only about 80 had joined the GFWBF; if the workers were confident enough to elect spokesmen to the works committee why was there not a hundred per cent organization? By raising these problems directly with the workers the officials were trying to minimize the tendency of the Grindrod workers to act separately from the DSLSC workers in deciding to go ahead with works committee elections away from the GFWBF workers' meetings. Similar problems existed at the Point, many indunas had joined but few other workers were members (at that time there were only 17 paid up members of the GFWBF). The officials asked why the workers had not poured into the GFWBF offices after the strike. How many gangs were represented by the workers at the meeting? They argued that the only way to conquer fear of dismissals was through mass membership as all the workers could then say they were members. The

officials argued that the workers should also remember that the benefit fund provided funeral and independent medical benefits; possibly this would convince those who were afraid of organizing around the workers' demands.

Analysis of the membership of the GFWBF among stevedoring workers which was done by the officials to gauge the actual strength of the organization in production and to work out ways of penetrating into all the stevedoring gangs. The workers reported there were 39 gangs at Grindrods and about 90 at the Point; at the meeting on 30 September 1972 there were representatives from 3 DSLSC and 12 Grindrod gangs, and on 7 October 1972 there were 2 DSLSC and 9 Grindrod gang representatives. These representatives were supplemented by workers not attached to gangs (particularly night-watchmen — who were surprisingly militant — sweepers, spare winchmen, learner gangwaymen, etc.). The GFWBF officials worked on the assumption that there would be organic solidarity in the gangs as the workers shared the same dangers and the discipline of production on a collective basis. The membership of the GFWBF in each gang, from the limited data available, does seem to correspond to having a leading militant in the organization or having the induna join. Where the indunas joined the workers seemed to feel there was no immediate danger of being victimized and a fairly high level of membership was possible in the gang. The problems of organization were particularly acute in those gangs where there were autocratic indunas, and in several gangs where there were leading members of the GFWBF the other workers were reported to be 'too frightened'. The early strategy of the GFWBF leaders at Grindrods was to win over the indunas so that the labourers would follow and there seems to have been 'negotiations' between some leading workers and indunas who were wavering in their support of the GFWBF, but after a few meetings the stevedoring members advised the officials that the best way of organizing was approaching the workers 'one by one'. The various strategies of organization throw doubt on Sack's argument that the DSLSC gangs were constituted around abakhaya who, coming from the same

district, were most likely to trust each other.<sup>90</sup> In discussions with the workers on the problems of organization there was reported to be deep distrust among the DSLSC gangs on the subject of collective organization and it appears that the workers joined secretly. They were certainly opposed to having discussion about organization among the gangs at work even though some of the DSLSC indunas had joined. Only one DSLSC gang had more than one member.<sup>91</sup>

At the meeting on Saturday, 4 November 1972, the GFWBF officials attempted to devolve more of the complaints of the workers on to the shoulders of the works committee members. They offered to train the members in understanding the wage determinations, how to get the proper amount of accident compensation, and how to organize the workers at the point of production. It was suggested that instead of having general discussions about the situation in the docks the meetings should be structured around specific topics so that the workers' delegates could become trained leaders.

The workers were enthusiastic about building up the widest possible organization of the stevedores. 'The Point must work together with the Grindrod workers. That is why we are standing up here and in Cape Town, so that the masters can see we are unified. If we are united, the masters will be afraid.' The problem of organization, as before, came to be centred around the despotic rule of J. B. Buthelezi. The workers feared if he could not be removed the workers 'could never make a stand'. His presence seemed to symbolize the weakness of the workers' organization, the failure of the political initiatives and strike action by the workers, and a humiliating reminder of the Bantustan collaboration in their midst. Buthelezi was regaining the controls he exercised before his departure earlier in the year. Apparently after the strike, during which he was protected by the compound indunas and reportedly by the South African Police, he had

said to some workers: 'You people shouldn't be paid so much.' Knowing the rural connections of the workers and operating an effective network of informers and spies, the DSLSC delegates at the meeting felt he knew all the militants and would fire them at the first opportunity. One of the workers said that some colleagues who were coming with them to the meeting had disappeared on the way because they had been frightened at the prospect of being discovered by Buthelezi. The only answer the workers had to this obstacle was a mass meeting addressed by Dladla which would work out a method of handling the DSLSC compound manager.<sup>92</sup>

The post-strike situation at the DSLSC was fraught with difficulties for the workers even though the workers had not been defeated. At the end of the week of the strike the workers found they received different amounts in basic wage, even though they had all been on strike: the wages ranging from R4.90 to R6.80. The workers reported they were frightened to request an explanation from the office about these differences because they would be fired. By the time of the Saturday meeting on 11 November 1972, the workers were considering banning overtime as had the workers in Cape Town, to force the employers to consider their demands. The workers also considered writing a reply to an article which appeared in the Natal Mercury which they regarded as particularly insulting.<sup>93</sup>

The long-awaited wage recommendations were issued by the Wage Board on Friday, 17 November 1972. Instead of a substantial wage increase the Wage Board recommended only a R1.00 increase in the basic wage, with proportional increases to the daily allowance and overtime. This amounted to an increase of only 11.8 per cent in the actual minimum wage (as opposed to the 46.2 per cent increase claimed on the minimum wage in WD 308 which had been increased in October 1971). The overtime rate was increased by 41.4 per cent and Sunday time by 43.4 per cent. The TUCSA General Secretary gave an adulatory welcome to the recommended

wage increases, causing severe discomfort to the local organizing secretary, and losing TUCSA all credibility in the eyes of the workers. 'This is the Wage Board's finest hour. We sincerely welcome this fine example. The board is making a significant move to improve wages to a more realistic level.'<sup>94</sup> This statement weakened the national campaign which had been mounted to demand R18 a week minimum wage, the demand made by the DSLSC stevedores during their strike, and even considered reasonable by sections of the liberal press. Espie, the local organizing secretary, who had made the attempt to form a white collar dock workers' union, adopted a more critical view: 'I am gravely disappointed in the wage determination, the increase is very short of what anybody would desire, and just highlights how grossly underpaid stevedores have been.'<sup>95</sup> The Wage Board recommendations were posted on the notice boards at Grindrods and DSLSC and the workers invited to write objections to these wage rates to the Wage Board. Both companies, however, stated they would increase wages by the amount recommended by the Wage Board, whatever the outcome of the objections, on Monday, 27 November 1972.

The unusual practice of paying the wages recommended by the Wage Board before they were promulgated in a new wage determination demonstrated how concerned the employers were to avoid any delay which could give rise to further strike action. It also indicated that they were well aware that whatever the objections made by the workers to recommend wages the Minister of Labour inevitably approved them as a wage determination. The speed with which the employers responded to the recommended wages also was a way of pre-empting agitation against these wages.<sup>96</sup> The other tactic which was employed was to carry out an extensive purge of militant workers in the DSLSC. By Thursday, 23 November 1972, four days before the new wages were to be introduced, more than 15 leading workers employed by the DSLSC were victimized. Virtually all the DSLSC representatives who had spoken at the meetings of the GFWBF, and a large

proportion of the GFWBF membership, were dismissed. The workers' representatives from Grindrods were untouched, but deeply wary of repercussions from their employers. The unerring accuracy with which the DSLSC management had penetrated the meetings of the GFWBF to mark indunas and winchmen in particular who were leading resistance to the employers was proof that the fears of the DSLSC workers voiced again and again at the meetings that there were informers present were true. The rather minor counter measures which the GFWBF officials had adopted to attempt to control infiltration had proved ineffective, and the workers' organization suffered a substantial loss. It may have been that workers other than GFWBF members were also dismissed at the same time, as Sack alleges, but the victimizations were an effective barrier to any attempts to call together a committee of action against the new wage rates on the Saturday before they were implemented.

The way in which the victimizations were carried out indicated the swift execution of a concerted campaign. Individual workers were collected from work on the ships as though they were to be transferred to work on another ship. They were then taken to the DSLSC offices, thanked for their service to the company, and paid off in lieu of notice. After dismissal the workers were escorted by a compound policeman who saw to it that they took their belongings from the compound and did not hang around. It seems as though the management sought out class conscious long service workers as well as younger militants, and some workers reported that as many as fifty workers were eventually fired before the week ending Friday, 24 November 1972. The victimized workers who were members of the GFWBF gathered at Bolton Hall and made statements on their dismissal to the press. These workers said they had been victimized by the company because they had given evidence to the Wage Board hearing in July. The workers said that the management had refused to give them reasons for terminating their services, although this had been demanded. They had seen a list of names of workers who were to be dismissed, this list being drawn up from the time of the Wage Board

hearing when an employee of the company was seen noting the names of all the labourers who spoke.<sup>97</sup> The workers were bitterly resentful of the indifference of the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie to their plight, in particular for refusal to respond to the call of the workers for either Chief Buthelezi or B. I. Dladla to address a mass meeting which would enable the workers to organize themselves in preparation for the resistance to the Wage Board recommendations and to deal decisively with J.B. Buthelezi. In response to the criticism of the workers, B. I. Dladla argued the letter to him had been redirected from Nongoma and by the time he got it the crisis in the docks seemed to be over. He was 'heavily committed' on the dates the workers requested he should address them. 'I have written a letter conveying my support and promising to meet them on my return from Europe. The Kwa Zulu Government is with them all the way. We will attempt to get African trade unions legalised. We will do everything in our power to help them.'<sup>98</sup> As the axe of victimization fell on the militant workers the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie stepped to one side; Dladla's forceful rhetoric did not lead to a demand that the workers be reinstated. The DSLSC management not unnaturally denied that the workers who had been dismissed had anything to do with the Wage Board hearing. A spokesman declined to give any reasons apart from that the workers' services were no longer required.

The victimized workers were not prepared to go through the painstaking and time-consuming task of documenting their victimization for the Department of Labour to consider. They felt there was no prospect of their being reinstated, and most urgently had to get re-employment in the Durban area. Sack presents an argument that the workers who were victimized were being used by members of a 'royal' faction who 'were playing out a certain power game' in Zulu politics. He claims that of the 15 workers dismissed, 12 came from the King's home district and all had kinship ties with either the Royal clan or else with the King's indunas. He suggests that the

victimized workers did not have their case championed by the responsible KwaZulu Bantustan official because he was in the opposing Chief Gatsha Buthelezi faction. The workers who had been victimized had been pointed out by other stevedores who acted as informers. One of these informers who came from Mahlabathini (Chief Buthelezi's home district) said the reason he had 'fingered' some of the instigators of the strike was that they had 'tried to force him to do something that he could only do if asked to, by either his Chief or the latter's induna'. Another informer said that the instigators were consciously trying to undermine J. B. Buthelezi's authority and that 'their move had been a calculated political ploy'. The victimized workers had been trying to win votes for the Royalists who were expected to fare poorly in any coming election. Other informers corroborated this 'Bantustan politics' perspective of the October 1972 strike and the victimizations in late November.<sup>99</sup> The argument is flawed from a number of approaches, not least because it is advanced from a belief that the workers' demands and grievances were essentially frivolous and that 'most of their grievances were distortions of the actual situations which the strike was aimed at improving'. Since the stevedoring workers were 'well-paid' and employed by a benevolent company, some explanation other than material demands had to be found.<sup>100</sup> While indisputably the workers were aware of the rift between the King and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi which appears to have been over control over the chiefs, and some of the older workers looked to the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie to rid them of a black tormentor, the 'manipulation' was not from the countryside but from the workers. To the most emphatic demand of the African workers, that J. B. Buthelezi should be removed from his position of power in the DSLSC to permit the mass organization of the workers, no response came from the traditional leadership. The cry of the workers in the compound, outside in the streets during the strike, and at the GFWBF meetings, was almost obsessively for the removal of J. B. Buthelezi. (The GFWBF officials were concerned that as a symbol of their oppression the workers were concentrating too exclusively with his personality; his power, they explained,

came only from that granted by his employers and the apartheid state.) Not one worker from the DSLSC or Grindrods ever suggested that this universal cry was a form of anti-Chief Buthelezi politicking, some of J.B. Buthelezi's most ardent antagonists supported the letter to Chief Buthelezi calling for his removal.<sup>101</sup>

The whole saga of the workers' attempts to counter J.B. Buthelezi revealed only too profoundly the incapacity of the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie as a whole to support the concrete demands of the African working class. Instead there was a record of tacit and unspoken support for a man who operated a network of informers and spies which aimed to destroy all forms of working class organization which challenged the rule of the employers and the apartheid state in the docks. He may well have wanted to settle scores with some workers who were not industrially organized but had good political reasons to fight him as well as a working class opposition to agents of the employers, but his main thrust was aimed at the working class militants who were capable of leading the workers into another strike.<sup>102</sup> While the victimizations were taking place the company was taking on other workers as an immediate reserve in case of strike action. A worker sent by the GFWBF officials to ask for employment was told by a clerk that more than 100 workers had been employed and that the last seven had been engaged on Thursday, 23 November. It was reported that even workers who had been dismissed during the 1969 strike were being considered. More than 17 workers were said to be sacked (the numbers varied between 20 and 50). The worker was given a promise he would be engaged on Monday by a clerk who said that the company had hired 31 workers from Glebelands.<sup>103</sup> With this drastic counter action against the workers, the strike which the GFWBF officials thought was inevitable around the demand for R18.00 a week, was suppressed before it began. Inside the compound the fear of being dismissed was so intense that the workers stopped reading notices on the boards.<sup>104</sup>

In the aftermath of repression at the Point, a few of the leading workers from Grindrods and the DSLSC managed to meet during the week before Saturday, 2 December 1972, to draft objections to the Wage Board's recommendations. The full text of the workers' objections is not available, it appears to have been lost, but a draft of the objections outlines some of the fundamental demands of the workers which were to form part of a 10-point 'Dockers' Charter'. The objectors demanded that all categories of workers should be included in the determination: watchmen, fork-lift drivers, and clerks. The hours of the watchmen should be limited to those of the other workers. The fundamental demand for R18 a week was restated, as well as an end to all wage differentials between ports. The objectors stated they wanted a 40 hour, five day, week, overtime rates at time-and-a-half, and double time on the basic Sunday rate. All compulsory overtime should be ended. The workers should have three weeks' paid leave a year. Since they were required to report for work at 0630 the workers' hours of work should be calculated from that time. The objectors also demanded that similar requirements for wage envelopes should be specified as in the case of other industries. Finally the workers demanded that a worker who had been employed for more than 10 years should be paid a pension equal to his last year's earnings when his services were terminated.<sup>105</sup>

These objections to the proposed wage determination were considered by the meeting of stevedoring workers on Saturday, 2 December 1972, in the modified form of a 10-point charter. The workers saw the demands as a basis for the unity of the stevedoring workers after the severe setbacks at the Point. In addition to the demands put forward to the Wage Board in the objections, the Charter called for an end to the migratory labour system and compounds as accommodation for workers. This point caused some discussion, the workers arguing that life in the compounds was humiliating and also kept them under the direct control of the employers, but a straightforward demand for the abolition of the compound system was not enough. 'If we say that

the compound system must be got rid of then the rail service must be more efficient.' Others argued the demand was essential because when the workers were dismissed they were forced to leave the compound, as had happened to workers at the Point. It was agreed that the Charter should be published with articles explaining how the workers were affected by the new recommendations.<sup>106</sup>

While at the DSLSC the workers had been disorganized by victimizations and the power of the employer to create an immediate reserve as a threat against strike action, at Grindrod the dispute over hours and wages maintained a constant state of readiness for action among the workers. Some reduction in the hours of overtime work were suggested by the employers because of the implementation of the wage increase. The workers responded by demanding R18 a week instead of R9.50 and threatened to stop working overtime. A meeting on Friday, 1 December 1972, brought an agreement that no changes would be made in the hours and the workers would receive their increase from the following week. The workers were concerned because the management was starting to employ a number of new workers who were to start in January; this could mean a war of hiring and firing against the workers as at the DSLSC.

The works committee at Grindrods took up some of the primary demands of the workers about conditions of service: the assaults by white foremen against the workers, dismissals, inadequate payslips, and the persistent demand for backpay for having to take up the Saturday hours during the hours of work Monday to Friday.<sup>107</sup> Some progress was made on the question of assaults on the workers with the general and ambiguous formula: 'If a white worker assaults a black worker the white worker must be sacked, and if a black worker assaults a white worker, or an Indian worker, then he also must be sacked.' The summary dismissals at the company were slowed down by an agreement to make the foreman get the assent of two other workers, an induna and an

independent worker.<sup>108</sup> But by Saturday, 13 January 1973, however, the committee asked the GFWBF stevedoring meeting to agree it should resign.

The dispute over the hours which were worked between December 1971 and 16 October 1972 became more acute with each meeting. The workers argued that when the hours were changed M. Grindrod agreed that the company would pay for the extra hour each day which was added to the week through doing away with Saturday work. During this time the workers lost one hour overtime a day. 'Instead of working 9 hours a day we were required to work 10 hours a day. This means that we lost 5 hours overtime each week.' The workers said that in discussing this point with M. Grindrod he had agreed to pay the extra hour at the overtime rate. Neave, the chairman, contradicted the workers' arguments and the workers felt that with the continual work required of them on Saturday and compulsory overtime, there was no point in continuing the discussion of workers' demands through the works committee. The dispute developed in the following weeks as the strike movement gained momentum in Durban. On Thursday, 24 January 1973, the Department of Labour official attended a meeting of the works committee with Neaves who claimed he knew nothing about the 4 hours overtime rate a week but only the extra hour to be worked on Friday.<sup>109</sup> The workers were denied access to the directors, and they were now determined to take their case to court.<sup>110</sup> Before the works committee meeting ended the Department of Labour official disappeared, probably to deal with the increasing number of strikes in the Durban area.

The running dispute over hours and wages at Grindrods enabled the workers to maintain the pressure on management without the victimization of their leadership. As the workers in Durban moved into mass action in support of their demands for a wage of at least R20 in strike after strike of nightwatchmen, brick workers, municipal workers, textile, metal and construction workers, the workers in the docks who had led the demands of the

African working class from June 1972 were held back by the disunity wreaked on them by an intelligent and despotic management, and by a massive show of strength by the armed forces in the docks.

At a meeting of the stevedoring workers on Saturday, 17 February 1973, the workers reported that their demands for the immediate payment of R18 a week were not being met, although the employers were promising a review of wages in November 1973. When the workers made their demands clear, the response of the employers was to call in the armed forces.<sup>111</sup> If the docks were to come out on strike at this moment the ruling class feared a potentially insurrectionary situation with more than 50,000 workers out on strike at one stage and with every day bringing fresh workers out with ever-increasing demands. The mass character of the strike movement disorganized the state's response, with the police reduced to dashing from one industrial area to another staging large demonstrations of force when management made final offers to the workers. Surveys of the mass strikes argue that the strength of the strike movement lay in the low-wage, large-scale factories characterized by oppressive management, frequent dismissals, and victimization of workers' leaders. The textile industry (which is highly concentrated in the Durban area) produced some of the most prolonged struggles of the time, although the metal industry experienced a higher number of strikes.<sup>112</sup> Striking workers called on neighbouring factories to support their demands, mass pickets gathered outside the factories to stop any scabs. Virtually without exception the strikers refused to put forward representatives, aware that there were massive powers of victimization available to the management and the police and wary of the compromised leadership of the employers' indunas and favourites. The 'negotiations' took the form of workers shouting demands for between R20-R30 a week and refusing to elect leaders or return to work. Employers and the police responded by threatening mass dismissals and prosecution, but eventually the employers were forced to offer some minor wage increases. The workers then shouted down the offer, but were eventually

forced through necessity to return to work. But as one factory returned to work, another came out on strike, and the momentum of the strike wave was ultimately broken only through the growing presence of the police in army uniforms flown in from other centres and the lack of strike funds. Street demonstrations by workers which threatened to draw all the strikers together, to call out non-striking workers, and to turn the factory strikes into a general strike and confrontation with the apartheid state were dispersed by the police. In the period from January to the end of March 1973 there had been more than 160 strikes involving 61,410 workers.<sup>113</sup>

The forces which had been arrayed against the stevedores on 23-24 October 1972 and which had forced the workers back to the ships without any concessions were weakened and divided by the mass character of the strike movement. In the face of united mass action the police were reduced to saying: 'The police have nothing whatsoever against people demanding higher wages — provided they do not break the law', a statement which marked a tactical retreat as African workers lost their fear of police retaliation in acting illegally. In these conditions of working class ferment, the workers who had led the African working class in class action, rejection of the ideological control of the employers, and in time, were not to have a significant part. An explanation can be found not in the fact that the workers had recently had a wage increase (which they had rejected), but rather in the successful deployment of all the resources of management and the state in disorganizing the workers' struggle before the mass strikes began. This had not led to the defeat of united action among the stevedores, but it would take time for the workers to reorganize in the new conditions of struggle.

The very success of the strike movement, the sudden spontaneous upsurge of action at more than 160 factories, certainly disorganized the state's response and weakened the ability of employers to have hundreds of

police on call when delivering ultimatums to the strikers, but also led to a lack of cohesiveness in working class action and demands. The workers' demands were certainly unified through the press reports of other strikes, the original demand of R20 at the mass meeting in June 1971, carried through to the 'industrial' demand of R18 by the stevedores in June 1972, and then the strikers' demands of at least R20 in January-February 1973, certainly represented a collective conception of what was a 'fighting' demand to be placed before employers and the state. This unity at the level of economic demands was, however, not a product of deliberate organization, and this constituted a weakness in the strike movement. Without a strike committee to gather the demands of all the workers, the strike movement could be dissolved in the fragments of forced retreats, and the political nature of the workers' demands could not be developed. The Wages Commission, which had led economic agitation from the mass meeting of June 1971 and produced more than six copies of a workers' newspaper, failed in the task even of reflecting the radically transformed character of the workers' demands. The demands which it had championed at a number of Wage Board hearings were now being taken up at a mass level and the Wages Commission considered its work was complete in providing an impetus to the working class movement and helping to lay the foundations for future workers' organization in the GFWBF. The general demands of the black working class which were raised implicitly by the rejection of the state Bantu labour officers, the workers' discipline and united action, raised a fundamental demand for the right to associate and organize freely. The mass defiance of legal subordination and control showed the leading position of the black working class in the struggle against apartheid. But these themes were not to be translated into the concrete demands of the workers in the face of the repression of the employers and the police. The forward movement of the workers was to become limited to the growth and development of trade unionism without the formation of underground political working class organization.

Within these contradictory developments, the workers at Grindrods insisted that the armed forces be removed from the docks. The workers asked Neaves why they had been called in; they were not on strike but were calling for higher wages. The workers gave evidence of a different atmosphere within the company because of the mass strike movement. 'Neaves is frightened to fire anyone belonging to the benefit fund because he feels he will get into trouble. He wants to know before firing a person whether or not he is a benefit fund member.' When the foreman of the fork-lift drivers asked them if they belonged to the benefit fund, they replied they all belonged to their organization. The security officer received a letter from the workers saying all the security guards were now members. 'He told them they were not allowed to belong to any organization because they are part of the security of the company. The security guards told him that they could belong to any organization they wanted to.' The workers claimed that Neaves was unsure of his own safety and carried a gun.<sup>114</sup> He had responded to the workers' demands by saying that if they wanted such a large increase they should rather resign. When the workers heard they had to 'get out' if they wanted an increase they demanded to know what law empowered the employers to force them to resign. Neaves replied that it was the regulation of the company. The workers argued this was not an adequate response to their demands. When the police were called in they requested to talk to the officer in charge to ask them what they were doing in the docks. Neaves refused them permission to speak to the police who he claimed had nothing to do with the demands of the workers; they were doing their duties and the workers were not to interfere with them. When some of the Grindrod workers were employed at the A Shed at the Point, two police sergeants came on board the ship and stared at the workers but said nothing. They were accompanied by a Grindrod supervisor. 'The workers were highly embarrassed because they were no longer employees of the company but prisoners since they were being scrutinized by the police.'<sup>115</sup> The workers' demands concerned the Department of Labour which sent an

official, Skene, to ask the workers about the dispute over hours and Saturday working. He asked the workers who had told them that Saturday was not to be worked. One of the leading workers said that it had been mentioned at the Wage Board sitting on 17 July and was generally agreed upon between the employers.<sup>116</sup> The letter the workers sent directly to the managing director, M. Grindrod, in the words of the workers made Neaves 'feel ill' and caused him to accuse the workers of 'backbiting'. As usual, the attempt of the workers to get through directly to the real powers in the company, the directors, was parried; M. Grindrod was said to be in New Zealand and Ross, the workers were told, was away. In the face of the prevarication of the employers and their reinforcement through the armed forces, the members of the works committee decided to call upon the workers to demand that the indunas and Neaves be excluded from the meetings of the works committee.<sup>117</sup> This would strengthen the position of the GFWBF as a workers' organization within the company immensely,

The crisis at Grindrods was precipitated by an upsurge in workers' resistance which was being reflected by the decisive actions by the works committee representatives. When the workers at Grindrods had received the wages recommended by the Wage Board they had refused to work on Saturday or Sunday. The winchmen had said that the employers would have to do their jobs 'because their energy was running at a loss'. The workers told the works committee they were not prepared to work weekends and wanted to end on Friday night. Why were they not receiving conditions similar to workers employed at Port Elizabeth? The workers complained of being treated as togts; 'our pay is tantamount to a togt'.<sup>118</sup> With this intensity of antagonism to the employers and a growing commitment to organization through the GFWBF, the Grindrod management was forced to rely more directly than other employers on the visibility of the armed forces. The company could not make any concessions which would set the stevedores

alight with the possibility of a crack in the unity of all employers in the docks. But, equally, the workers were restrained by the level of disorganization imposed by the DSLSC through dismissals, the armed forces, and the lack of a united set of demands of a strike committee which could transform the mass strikes into a political uprising.

The tension between the increasing determination of the workers and an obdurate employer brought almost unbearable pressure on the members of the GFWBF on the works committee. Late in January 1973 one of the leading workers on the works committee said he wanted to resign because he and the others had achieved nothing for the workers. At a meeting of the stevedoring workers the other members asked him whether he expected changes to come overnight. One of the workers said: 'You do not know the aim of our struggle. What is being done needs someone who may die doing it. A person who fights does not get harmony, but a hard struggle and cannot get afraid. It is not easy to demand our rights from the whites. The people who were elected must be prepared for the struggle and have the courage to do this work.'<sup>119</sup> For the worker who was being encouraged the reassurance served both to support his work and confirm his leadership.

Although the workers were unable to go on to the offensive in strike action in support of their demands, the prolonged nature of the disputes between the workers and management expressed at the works committee meetings, and the persistent demands for the R18 a week demand to be met, caused severe strain particularly on the workers' representatives. The mass strikes and growing unity of the workers in Grindrods limited the extent to which management could retaliate against the workers' leadership. Each assault on the workers became keenly contested by the workers and taken up by the leadership. On one occasion an assault on a fork-lift truck driver by a white supervisor had severe repercussions for the supervisors. The driver complained about the assault, and after his statement had been corroborated

by other workers, the white supervisor was dismissed. Management was acting in terms of the agreement on assaults reached between the works committee and the employers and probably feared potential strike action by the workers.

Shortly after this incident it seems as though both the employers and the state acknowledged that the combativity of the workers' leaders had to be curbed. As management found the resistance of the workers too great to contend with, the state became involved. On Wednesday, 28 February 1973, one of the leading workers was asked to report to the office and found Neaves and a white man at the office. He was told to go with an African man to a car at Shed 10. He was instructed to get into the car and then driven out of Durban in a northerly direction towards Umhlanga Rocks. Initially, the white man tried to persuade him to provide him with information about the benefit fund because it was not registered with the state.

I asked him how he knew about me. He told me he had seen my name in some documents. He said he was working for the Government. He interrogated me about being a member of the works committee. He asked me what kind of things we do. I explained that we were trying to get better wages and working conditions. He accused me of being a Communist and tried to intimidate me.

Two African men in the back of the car who were wearing balaclavas then grabbed him by his overalls and tried to throttle him shouting he was a Communist. They pulled him out of the car and into the sugarcane fields and then told him to stay in the bush until the car left.

Deeply shocked and bruised, the worker managed to hitch a lift back to work. One of the workers approached him to ask him where he had been, but he did not trust him and said he had been seeing 'his lawyer from Johannesburg'. He refused to see Neaves when requested, but on Friday, 2 March 1973, he asked Neaves if he knew the people who had come for him on

Wednesday, how those people knew him and what Neaves had told them. Neaves claimed to know nothing about them and to have said nothing to them. 'I asked him who gave them permission to take me and said he wanted to kill me. He asked me if I wanted the company to take legal action against them. I refused and gave the company my notice.'

This incident symbolized the relations which existed between the company and the police for the workers, who were furious. At a meeting on Saturday, 3 March 1973, the workers asked the works committee to convey their dissatisfaction with the present works committee to Neaves. They decided it should be disbanded and another elected without Neaves as chairman.<sup>120</sup> The works committee was dissolved.

### Works committees and collective organization

In the immediate aftermath of the mass strikes the GFWBF officials, who were also acting as union officials in a number of other industries, gave considerably less attention to the organization of the stevedoring workers than before. The strike wave drew them particularly into the textile industry at first, and then into a number of other industries in which it seemed possible to make a rapid advance into mass organization on the basis of a sympathetic registered trade union and the large-scale character of the factories. Attempts were also being made to cement links with the trade unions in the garment and textile industry in the Transvaal and there were shifts in employment. This change of emphasis and reorganization broke down some of the links which existed with the workers and particularly the regular Saturday meetings held with the workers. Other GFWBF officials were assigned to take over the work of the docks, but the workers found some of the changes abrupt, and new relations of trust did not develop to the level of understanding achieved between June 1972 and February 1973. These changes made it difficult for the workers to work out strategies to work with or resist the development of works committees within the companies and to maintain the pressure for the demands made at the Wage Board sitting and refined in the objections made to the Wage Board.<sup>121</sup>

Despite the quite definite hiatus in general organisation of the stevedoring workers, the GFWBF had a surprising allegiance from the workers and membership from stevedoring workers continued to grow. Even at the Point, where the most severe reverses had been suffered, workers continued to join the benefit fund as individuals. By January 1973 there were 126 members of the GFWBF employed by Grindrods and the numbers of Point workers joining was beginning to pick up again. The workers continued to look to the organization of black workers in Durban as a whole as a source of support and as the only basis on which any democratic organization of stevedoring workers was possible. Most of the workers still felt that a mass meeting with B. I. Dladla, the KwaZulu executive councillor for community affairs, could lay the basis for a mass stevedoring workers' organization. But with the bitter disappointments of the past, the prudent avoiding of the issue of J. B. Buthelezi by the collaborating African petty bourgeoisie, the links with the KwaZulu Bantustan were becoming increasingly contentious. The controversy came to a head after one of the leading workers at Grindrods took the initiative to collect money to cover the travel and accommodation expenses of Dladla in coming to address the workers.

The collection was made with a slightly ironic intention: to show that workers on poverty wages could meet the expenses of a salaried official, to shame Dladla into making an appearance. By Saturday, 20 January 1973, R44.94 had been collected from the workers. A leading worker objected to making a contribution to the expenses fund; there was no need for the collection because Dladla would be using government cars and petrol, and during his overseas trip all his expenses had been met. 'Dladla has done nothing for us', he argued, and the money should rather have been given to the GFWBF official who had worked months with them. He suggested the money should be returned to the workers; Dladla was paid to do a job but seemed to spend all his time overseas. It was finally agreed that the money should be used for organization rather than meeting the expenses of an official.

The issue showed the growing disillusionment of the workers with all sections of the African petty bourgeoisie in the reserves who claimed to represent their political aspirations. The King, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, and B.I. Dladla, had all manoeuvred ambiguously when confronted with the demand for support from one of the most militant sections of the black working class, and the strategy of being able to hold a mass meeting of workers before the strike of 23-24 October or even afterwards was shown to be a false hope. Faced with declining support from the GFWBF officials and without the prospect of dramatic external intervention to secure a 'legitimate' basis for a mass meeting, the stevedores turned towards the works committees which the employers were now falling over themselves in approving and establishing. In terms of amended legislation there could be two forms of plant committee: a works committee which would be composed solely of workers, and a liaison committee headed by an employer's representative with half the workers appointed and the other half elected.<sup>123</sup> These minor concessions were the furthest the apartheid state would go in making concessions after the mass strikes, and the workers, who were fundamentally distrustful of any representative committee under the scrutiny of the employers, were forced to make use of them.<sup>124</sup>

Even before the legislation was amended, the DSLSC made a public announcement of providing the stevedores with a 'grievance platform'. This was undoubtedly a response both to the October strike and to the growing (though numerically small) membership of the GFWBF. Early in December 1972 Dreyer announced that he had prepared a draft constitution for consideration by the 'Bantu Safety Committee'. The works committee would decide each grade of worker representation. 'We still have to deal with the problem of how big the committee is going to be; how the various classes of labour are going to be represented; and whether minorities, such as the few Pondo workers, will have to be protected by including provisions for nomination.' The statement seems to imply that there would be some ethnic

criteria for election. Dreyer was not prepared to comment on the extent of the power which would be permitted to the works committee and did not want to compare it with trade unions 'because I don't know enough about trade unions'.<sup>125</sup> The workers were mystified by the announcement that their opinions were to be sought, and like the GFWBF officials had only read about the works committee in the press. It was only towards the end of March 1973, after the main force of the mass strikes had been expended, that meetings were held with the workers on the subject of the works committee. On Wednesday, 28 March 1973, a meeting was called by J. B. Buthelezi to ask what the workers felt about a works committee. The workers immediately responded by saying they did not want a separate company committee, 'we would like to have a committee in the benefit society'. Buthelezi evidently felt he had the situation well under control because he did not oppose this suggestion. He said the workers could choose their representatives and he would bring them to the benefit society. The workers felt this would be a dangerous strategy as Buthelezi had his own group, the indunas (possibly more specifically the senior indunas) who were chosen by him and not elected by the workers. They felt he might encourage members of his 'select group' to join the benefit fund. 'They will perform the duty of informers for the management and on the whole the workers are afraid to come to the benefit society.' What was being introduced at the DSLSC was a liaison committee, chaired by a management appointee, with half of the members selected by management. The 'democratic' quality of such a committee can be imagined, the workers' representatives facing their foremen in discussion, with the chairman having the right to hire and fire them. With an effective informer and spy network, the DSLSC management would have little to fear from the workers joining the GFWBF, democratic control by the workers being completely negated by the axe of victimization. The workers complained that none of the demands made in the objections to the Wage Board recommendation were being implemented; wage deductions had increased, there were still no adequate pay slips, wages were fluctuating

without apparent reason, and for the first time the workers complained strongly that they were being assaulted and that no measures were being taken against the white supervisors.<sup>126</sup>

At Grindrods, management made efforts to revive the works committee as a 'consultative committee' in early May 1973 by having an election by secret ballot. This was strongly resisted by the workers who considered that the employers' control over elections was ridiculous; they wanted a show of hands.<sup>127</sup> After the works committee had been reconstituted the same demands were made as before, with the exception of the wage demands. The answers to the questions posed by works committee members on 26 September 1973 show a reassertion of control by management accompanied by greater clarity in its decisions and typed minutes. The duties of a committee member were stipulated as to promote a spirit of cooperation and goodwill by interpreting 'employee opinion' and 'to explain the views and wishes of the Company to the employees'. The other duties related to accident prevention, saving of fuel, transport problems, training and discipline. The item discipline is the most exact: 'ways and means of reducing absenteeism, eliminating unpunctuality, timeous boarding of transport, cargo security and the safety of ships etc. and interpretation and application of the Company's rules and regulations'. The clause indicates a clear intention by the employers to compel the worker representatives to discipline the workers in the interests of the employers.

Despite the heavy dominance of the interests of the employers in the 'duties of a committee member', the points raised by the workers were fundamental. Attempts were made to control arbitrary dismissals, to get covered lorries for transport, an annual bonus, more employment for sweepers, special allowances, to do away with the necessity of producing passes when collecting pay, and to stop the victimization of African workers by white supervisors.<sup>128</sup>

To the wide range of demands made at this and other meetings there was a definite hardening of the management position in comparison to the rather panicky responses in January-February 1973. 'The decision to dismiss is the sole responsibility of the Company', came in response to criticism of arbitrary dismissals. The annual bonus was flatly turned down. Instead of agreeing to employ more sweepers (ie. more light duty for injured workers) the workers should try to keep the company premises clean. The complaint about having to produce reference books was met by instructions for Indians and Coloureds to produce their Identity Cards when collecting pay. The demand to end victimization was said to be not specific enough. In the minutes the workers complained that they were perturbed by a lack of positive response to their grievances. There were few concessions made: that workers would be allowed to leave work if they had completed working a ship at 1500, and that additional workers would be employed to extend unpaid leave to one month.<sup>129</sup> In the absence of thorough collective organization together with the Point workers, and a united set of demands as in the projected 'Dockers' Charter', these minor concessions were sufficient to keep the works committee alive. The detailed minutes and investigations into the points raised by the workers did represent some advance for the workers from the informal arguments which the workers' leaders had with Neaves. The growing organization and resistance of the workers had reached a point where management was becoming increasingly concerned to monitor the workers' demands and to make appropriate counter measures. The advance in independent organization which was marked by the workers' openly announcing their membership of the benefit fund and putting forward their demands during the flood of mass strike action, was being met by the growth of 'scientific management' on the part of the employers. The unmethodical responses of Neaves to the workers' leaders was being replaced by detailed discussions in the offices of senior management under the chairmanship of one of the workers. A concession to the workers which this new form of consultation took (the workers were always complaining that directors

who made the decisions were never available to the workers when their demands were being made), it was also a more sophisticated method of defusing the growth of general demands among the workers. A new personnel manager was employed in July 1974, apparently to take over the 'personnel' questions from the compound manager, Neaves. The development of personnel management was one of the most universal responses of the employers to the strike movement and aimed at removing the multitude of practices which affected the 'hygiene' of the social relations within the companies, deploying labour more profitably, and separating the primary issue of wages raised during the strikes from the other demands of the workers on which compromises were less costly.

Despite this type of advance in company management, brought about by the rising level of class struggle, the command of the employers over the workers had to be constantly reinforced through the discipline of dismissal and abuse by supervisors. On Sunday, 30 June 1974, one of the leading members of the workers' committee was called in to the personnel office and told by the night shift foreman that he was said to be a Communist. The works committee members were deeply angered by this abuse by the supervisors and argued that if one was accused then the whole committee was Communist and therefore should be abolished. An emergency meeting of the liaison committee was called on Wednesday, 10 July 1974, and the worker who was accused said that the company was cooperating with the Security Branch who had interrogated and beaten him in February 1973. The workers said that the worker who had been accused of being a Communist had been informed that the police were coming to pick him up again 'and that is the reason he is scared about the matter'. The workers' representatives insisted that there be a full discussion 'to go deep on the matter because it affects the committee as a whole'. The management countered the hostility of the workers by insisting that 'the matter is going to be treated as urgent but through correct channels'. Essentially, the workers were

insisting on the removal of Neaves from the commanding position over the workers for acting oppressively and cooperating with the Security Branch in suppressing the organization of the workers. Neaves was stung by their attacks and said he had been insulted by the committee members and that 'the management is also letting him down'. The whole issue illustrates both the necessity of the employers to keep up pressure on the workers' leaders and an ability of the workers to manoeuvre within the committee structures to isolate certain sections of management. In the context of the attempt by the employers to modify worker/employer relationships through interaction in liaison meetings, the workers' power was to threaten to dissolve the committee structures, and destroy the employers' attempt to stabilize relationships.<sup>130</sup>

### Conclusions

In the period 1972-73 there was a most exceptionally open struggle of the stevedores against the employers, 'open' both in the sense of being public knowledge to workers in other industries and other employers and in the sense of there being a direct opposition of the views of the workers to those of the employers. The intimate details of the stevedores' conditions of service, their views on their accommodation, the indunas, and all aspects of work, previously secret, were abruptly to be found in the newspaper columns of the bourgeois press.<sup>131</sup> The openness of the struggle was the surface reflection of the deep current of resistance running through the black working class. The attempts to transform social action into organization sharpened the class consciousness of the African workers, clarifying the exact nature of the employers to the apartheid state, and helping to demystify the opposition of the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie to some of the aspects of national oppression.

Within this relatively short period the stevedores, as the black working class as a whole, moved from forms of resistance which involved

the grey area of manoeuvre, to the flood of demands and decisive class action in strikes and then again on to strategic struggles. With the vast powers of the state and the employers deployed against them the workers were searching for techniques of resistance which did not involve a complete commitment to total victory or failure, to enlarge the field of social action which did not bring dismissal. The workers were searching for methods of struggle which could secure the position of the workers and be an element in reducing the employers' power; to widen the crevices in the granite-like resistance of the employers in preparation for the dynamite of strike action. Yet strike action when it came did not bring the victories the workers had anticipated, but neither a decisive defeat; all forms of class action compelling the question of the most effective methods of organization and the nature of class demands. Within the working class there was strong evidence of an active minority ('leaders' not according to election, but in the ability to formulate the demands of the workers and carry forward their organization) which championed the demands of the workers, which were its own, and acted as its 'collective intelligence', reasoning out a working class position and producing documents. It was this group within the workers which was the underground organization, known to a few, but supported by all.

It was the existence of this underground among the labourers which created the support of other associations, such as the Wages Commission, for the stevedores and caused the indunas to waver under the pressure of contradictory forces. In the struggle for organization which took place through the GFWBF, relatively open, and attempting to build a mass base within the stevedores, many of the indunas 'came over' to the side of the labourers. Ironically, this seems to have affected the character of the GFWBF and its ability to provide a platform for the militant labourers. The meetings of the stevedores tended to become a talking shop, a place for registering complaints, an opportunity for debate, without becoming

mass meetings. The attempt to organize the workers 'industrially' on the model of a trade union within the GFWBF posed sharply the problem of workers' democracy and class organization. The GFWBF officials had a clearly defined model of workers' organization in mind, with a delegated authority passing directly from the workers to a stevedoring committee charged with providing the leadership for the workers' struggles. Yet this conception of democratic organization was impossible under the dictatorship of the employers and the apartheid state, and rested completely on the ability of the organization of the workers to 'create the space' for democracy. The grievances and complaints registered by the officials could not be developed into fighting demands for the workers because the GFWBF itself was desperately struggling for legal existence as a registered friendly society. A gulf developed between agitation and organization, the economic agitation of the Wages Commission based on no open organization behind the production of newspapers and pamphlets vulnerable to counter-attacks by the employers and the state, while the groups of open meetings conducted through the GFWBF provided for no agitation which could be pinned on the workers.

The translation of the workers' complaints and grievances into fighting demands was no easy task for the university-educated officials. The meetings with the workers exposed the officials to an underworld of arbitrary decisions and intrigue as well as demanding systematic attention to details.<sup>132</sup> Without this understanding, the officials were incompetent to provide advice, let alone lead the workers. The complexity of the issues was shown in the case of working hours. The docks are characterized by 'five day' weeks which are worked Monday to Friday and include Sunday, a 45 hour week involving up to at least 60 hours of actual work, and a generally elastic definition of working hours. The relatively simple labour process disguised the complexity of relations among the workers and of working conditions. In the face of these difficulties the meetings tended to dissolve into complaint sessions with an over-emphasis on the views of winchmen and indunas.

The GFWBF strategy was to develop a mass base in the stevedoring trade, through the overwhelming preponderance of members, to overcome the employers' ability to victimize one worker after another. The idea was one of quantity, being membership, becoming transformed into quality, a disciplined organization, through decisive working class action. The failure of the GFWBF to be able to provide leadership at crucial moments of struggle (apart from providing advice and support) pointed to the need for different forms of organization within a mass grouping like the benefit fund. Despite the compelling arguments of the workers for fully democratic associations and direct control over 'leadership', the evidence of victimization of leading workers and the abstention of the workers' organization in putting forward the general demands of the workers during the mass strikes, pointed in the direction of a secret and illegal organization, capable of acting in the freedom denied to the open democratic association of workers.

## Notes to Chapter 8

1. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi insisted that elections in KwaZulu could not be held before all Zulu-speaking people were issued with the new 'citizenship certificates' instead of the old passes. The citizenship certificates go even further than the passes in depriving African people of urban and industrial rights, even if the Bantustan regimes did not accept the goal of independence.
2. For other leaders such as Matanzima there were assassination attempts.
3. Cosmos Desmond, 1972, The Discarded People, Penguin, points out that African people were removed even if only a few kilometres to secure the 'ethnic' basis for the rule of the Bantustan leaders.
4. Some of the strongest protests against the resettlement came from the white radicals such as Cosmos Desmond, who documented the horrific conditions in which people were dumped in desert-like areas to starve. Their protest provided the impetus for the policy of rural reconstruction adopted by SASO which vigorously opposed the entire Bantustan program, but which looked to the countryside rather than the workers as the future arena of struggle.
5. The word 'semi-open' is used guardedly to convey a spectrum of organization ranging from the closed and secret, the 'underground'; the 'semi-open' associations which do not deny access to people in a particular sector known to each other; and the open organization of the publicized meeting and trade union which admits all workers in a sector whether known or not by the organizers. This classification is sociological and in the realm of trade unionism, and does not correspond to the categories of trade unionism and the revolutionary party developed in What is to be done?
6. The initial discussions were extraordinarily convoluted possibly because the African workers who were approached were in industries covered by registered trade unions and suspicious of persons associated with their discriminatory practices. Many of those 'leaders' were also later found to be workers who did not enjoy the support of the militants in the factories. Particular institutions attracted particular leaders and the benefit fund came to be led by fairly conservative workers who were not in step with advanced workers in the docks, abattoir and cotton industry.
7. An opinion was obtained from counsel on the legal status of trade unions not registered in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act.
8. As could possibly be imagined, registration was never finally achieved despite support from excellent lawyers. Registration was blocked both by the hostility of the insurance companies who stood to lose a lot

from the 'African market', and by the Security Police who became increasingly interested in GFWBF activities. The Registrar said that the only benefit funds he would register were those joint funds established by employers and their employees and underwritten by an insurance company. When the contradictions between this administrative decision and the Friendly Societies Act was pointed out the Act was amended!

9. Their leaders were those most insistent on registration 'with Pretoria'.
10. In addition to the police network of spies and informers, companies in South Africa (as elsewhere) have their own networks which can reach deeply into working class organizations. The spies receive a special bonus or other privileges at work. South African Labour Bulletin, May-June 1976, Case Study: The Function, Nature and Effectiveness of the Statutory Liaison Committee — Pinetex, pp.40-58. The spies from the DSLSC seem to have had a particular relationship to J.B. Buthelezi, who has the right to fire workers, rather than to management as a whole.
11. Secret organization, of course, is not in itself a guarantee against informers.
12. Admittedly most of the stevedoring workers in the early meetings were from Grindrods which was nearest to the GFWBF offices, but the protests of the DSLSC workers were even stronger.
13. The telegrams usually carried news of the death of a close relative and meant the workers would apply for compassionate leave. The workers felt humiliated that they were illiterate and had to rely on management to give them their post.
14. There were a number of other grievances, but these will be returned to later in the chapter.
15. Ironically, one of the weaknesses of the militancy of the labourers and the Wages Commission was only in putting demands for the labourers. In a sense what was being demanded was the abolition of differentials, or at least their substantial narrowing, but by not putting forward the demands of the winchmen, for instance, this gave management the opportunity of separating the machine operators from the labourers. The demand for a substantial increase in wages tended to submerge an alternative industrial strategy which would have shifted power into the hands of the labourers and machine operators against the collaborating indunas.
16. Apart from the direct control over the workers exercised by the employers in the docks there are a multiplicity of police forces (railway, SAP, municipal police, customs and excise), protectors of private property (nightwatchmen), and 'special warders' who guard the ships. These

forces of repression are the natural enemies of the dock workers and there are frequent armed struggles with casualties on both sides. (Daily News, 28 March 1974) The clashes often occur when a stevedore is injured, but the overall relationship between the workers and the police (the workers call African nightwatchmen police) is established on the basis of property relations, the most common arrests being for stealing goods from the docks.

17. In this and other cases the compound manager stamped the pass or identity document with the insignia of the Bantu labour officer. Apparently he had been granted the powers of an official of the urban labour bureau; this increased enormously the control of the company over the workers. Any worker dismissed by the DSLSC could also be deported by the same company official from the urban area!
18. As in other capitalist countries, South Africa has an over-developed legal fraternity which specializes in adjustments of property relations: company cases, divorces, etc. During the complete life of the GFWBF (June 1972-1974) there was not one lawyer who understood even the most elementary procedures in trying to make use of industrial legislation or common law to advance the organization of the workers. The problem was not a legal one but political; one of the most brilliant revolutionary lawyers in South Africa, Rowley Arenstein, was hounded out of the profession by the state.
19. The whole question is obviously more complex than is developed here: even if action was possible through law this could encourage a 'legalist' outlook by workers. Workers want to initiate action after dismissal.
20. The details of the previous informal works committee at Grindrods were obscure but it seems as though the workers had demanded an end to compulsory work on Sunday. A worker, Mtembu, had been fired for not working on Sunday because he had attended the funeral of his child in 1968. There was a stoppage and W. Grindrod and F. Ross, directors of the company, eventually negotiated with the workers after the police had been brought in and had agreed that workers should not be compelled to work on Sunday and that replacements should be brought in from Dusty Millar, another company in the docks. The question of voluntary overtime, Sunday and Saturday time was persistently raised by the Grindrod and DSLSC workers. The clauses in the wage determinations on hours are purposely vague, only the maximum hours are defined (48) and there is nothing which makes it clear that overtime is voluntary.
21. The issue was, unfortunately, not quite so simple; in WD 308 employers were allowed to dictate when the workers were to take their holidays.
22. Minutes, 5 August 1972.

23. Minutes, 13 August 1972. At the meeting this point caused much comment and laughter, the workers thought these instructions summed up how ridiculous the DSLSC was becoming.
24. The worker felt the induna had been victimized because the African security guards had no argument against him. This case was taken up unsuccessfully by the GFWBF.
25. It seems as though there was some disturbance at the DSLSC on Monday, 7 August 1972, as a worker reported that many workers had arrived late at work as 'they were scared'.
26. This strategy was not discussed at any of the meetings and was reported to the meeting on 13 August 1972 as a fait accompli. This report was initially received by the meeting without comment, although the worker making the report (who was, incidentally, not employed by the DSLSC) was favourable.
27. Minutes, Friday 25 August 1972. Mr. Neaves was the compound manager of Grindrods who had been transferred from the mining industry. The minutes do not carry any report of what the GFWBF officials thought of both of these suggestions.
28. Both the TGWU constitution and handbook was studied to give some insight into how a mature working class was organized into trade unions. The projected dockers' handbook was based on the TGWU handbook which sets out the tasks of the TGWU shop stewards. There were several attempts to get together this handbook, the main problem being that the work of the shop stewards set out in the TGWU handbook was utterly utopian in the context of the employers' counter-offensive. Apparently there is no handbook yet written by any trade union or working class movement which describes in simple language how working class leaders can survive and develop in the factories the industrial and political organization of the workers.
29. The older worker expressed a quiet confidence in the workers, speaking slowly and methodically, the younger worker possibly more cautious, making notes, and making few interventions. The contrast between their characters: literate/illiterate, traditionalist/Christian; was submerged within a wider class loyalty.
30. The more conservative representatives on the executive committee of the GFWBF became quickly aware of this 'unconscious' politicization and soon accused some of the officials of rushing into action without their prior approval. The tensions between the conservative element and the officials and militants became ever sharper as the chances of the GFWBF being registered receded. There was, of course, a real basis to their fear — they were eventually prosecuted for administering an illegal benefit fund. The officials were house-arrested in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act, but the independent trade union movement continued to develop without either, after the GFWBF had served its function.

31. Lenin (1902): 400; CW, 5
32. The workers with whom preliminary discussions were held made it abundantly clear that they would only meet on a legal basis and were most emphatic that registration should be secured with the Registrar of Friendly Societies. These workers, who steadily lost influence as the working class movement developed, opposed the GFWBF taking up the tasks of leading the workers' demands. They favoured a secure relationship with the registered trade unions as 'parallel' unions, even if this meant cutting themselves off from other African workers. The reasons for this 'backwardness' cannot be gone into here, except to say this was far from being the dominant view of the GFWBF members.
33. Lenin (1902): 412-3; CW, 5
34. The issue contained no information about the GFWBF or about the meetings of stevedoring workers, although any workers who spoke to the distributors (the Wages Commission) were told that the meetings were taking place. Increasingly agitation and organization was becoming separated with an over-riding concern for the security of leading GFWBF stevedoring members. The issue also did not develop some of the 'new' demands of the workers uncovered in the meetings: annual leave, an end to assaults at work, gloves for winchmen, the need for payslips, and for an end to victimization.
35. The DSLSC do, however, call Dreyer 'Tekwana' (tickbird) because he is tall and wears the ridiculous white ducks of the shipping fraternity; it could also possibly infer he picks off his 'ticks' (the workers) one by one.
36. Information about what is going on in the harbour is gleaned by the workers from the English language liberal press, which devotes regular columns to shipping, and from Ilanga, the monopoly-controlled Zulu language newspaper. An important tool in the hands of the employers and the state was also to be Radio Bantu which is popular among Zulu-speaking people solely for its entertainment value, particularly presentation of Zulu music.
37. This worker had a fine grasp of the details of the wage calculations some of which is presented in the earlier chapter. These details and the precise changes in the proportion of ordinary to overtime in the changed hours which were later introduced caused the GFWBF officials who were university graduates much mental anguish!
38. These workers called themselves 'spare winchmen'. A similar system which saves employers the costs involved in training workers operates in the textile industry ('spare weavers') and very probably throughout all industries in South Africa.

39. This worker was well aware of the trade union tactic of 'leap-frogging' in wage setting; forcing employers to pay the rate for the job in other companies and industrial areas. The indunas at Dusty Millars were said to be paid considerable bonuses, R80 in June and R260 in December. The demand for a bonus represented the view of the workers that some of the accumulated labour should be returned to them, particularly when their labour power was exhausted (at 'retirement') which took place at an early stage in the demanding stevedoring trade.
40. Minutes, 9 (?) September 1972. This worker saw the intervention of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi as necessary to reconcile the indunas to the changes in power relations at the workplace. His statement provides, however, an analysis of Buthelezi's position within the apartheid system: granted leadership standing by the state and being watched by the workers.
41. This system was simply being adapted to the new conditions of class struggle in the docks, the company used these powers widely on other workers who for a number of reasons (their popularity, suspicion of stealing, insubordination) would not be immediately dismissed but not provided with a 'call-in card' and re-engaged. The contract labour system, particularly after the 1968 regulations, reinforced considerably the powers of employers to sift out the 'chaff' without having to face the threat of immediate strike action.
42. The 'cleverness' shown in Company policy displays the hidden hand of the Natal Employers' Association of which the DSLSC is a leading member. The NEA makes a special study of industrial legislation and provides expert advice to employers, far in advance of the well-intentioned legal advisers providing free legal services to the GFWBF.
43. The Government Gazettes which carry the details of workers who have not received the benefits due to them from the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner are full of the names of workers employed by the DSLSC. The efficient system of compensation which is claimed in Management notes (1966) does not exist.
44. Minutes, 16 September 1972.
45. The low level of working class organization under highly repressive capitalist states is not simply a product of the operations of the state apparatus, important though this is. The over-riding question is the class consciousness of the workers and their knowledge of the techniques of class organization. Highly repressive state apparatuses are often genuinely ignorant of the non-work activities of the workers. The explanation of low levels of working class activity because of the operations of the state leads to a mechanistic interpretation of social action.

46. The 'five-day week' is actually a six day week as Sunday work is compulsory. The hours in the wage determinations only refer to ordinary hours, there are no regulations about the amount of over-time worked.
47. Workers could be required to do overtime up to 2100 after starting at 0720. There were persistent complaints that the workers had to start at 0700 on Fridays to 'make up' for the loss of Saturday time to the employers. (Minutes, 16 September 1972) But by adjusting the ordinary hours of work by adding one hour's work a day there would be a total of 48 hours 18 minutes a week, so this tampering with the ordinary hours was illegal.
48. Daily News, 1 December 1971 and 8 January 1972.
49. These were at 1000 (a tea break) and 1700 (a meal break). The meal break was specified in WD 308 as to be granted between 1700 and 1900 for those workers doing overtime, with the change in the end of ordinary time this could have been taken at 1800. WD 308, 5 (4) b.
50. This is the difference between the 5 hours 'gained' and the 1 hour 40 minutes 'lost' through starting earlier.
51. The Daily News shipping correspondent (17 March 1972) claimed that 'the five day week scheme has failed'. See also Natal Mercury, 21 March 1972.
52. The workers' complaint that there was no compound at Grindrod was far from demonstrating acceptance of the migrant labour system but an argument against extending hours. This is an important question and will be considered in relation to the 'Dockers' Charter'.
53. The works committee system had not seriously been considered before this point because the officials were opposed to the works committees as part of the apartheid labour system and saw an alternative to having to use these committees in a mass workers' organization which would be an irresistible force against the employers.
54. Minutes, 23 September 1972. Getting a works committee registered in terms of the Act was no easy task when the Department of Labour sensed there was independent organization associated with the demand for registration. In the case of the abattoir workers, the GFWBF had to keep up correspondence (which was not acknowledged) for months before the Department accepted and recognized the works committee there. Being registered in terms of the Act by no means guaranteed the workers' representatives from victimization but it probably did restrain counter action from management.
55. Minutes, 8 October 1972.

56. Buthelezi was reported to have been removed on 24 August 1972 and the workers complained he had returned at a meeting on 7 October 1972. None of the Point workers mentioned him, his presence or absence, in the meetings held during the period.
57. It cannot be completely implausible to suggest that promises were made of special consideration for the employment of workers from particular areas, especially of the politically important Zulu heartland.
58. Minutes, 8 October 1972.
59. The idea of a 'Dockers' Charter' came from a reading of the history of the British labour movement. It would not simply be a statement of demands, but a proposal for fundamental changes in the conditions of dock workers including the migrant labour system.
60. Chief Buthelezi was staying at the home of a wealthy Indian person, on other occasions he stayed at the home of the United States Consul General when in Durban. He was at times prone to extravagant 'populist' anti-Indian statements, so the point is mentioned to illustrate the ambiguity of his politics.
61. Minutes, 9 September 1972.
62. Letter to The Chief Executive Officer, 7 October 1972.
63. Letter from M.G. Buthelezi to the Stevedoring Committee, 12 October 1972.
64. Dladla was later to have an important role in supporting both the strike movement and the fledgling open trade unions in Natal when the workers proved themselves capable of militant action independently of the Bantustan regimes. The forward movement of the African working class would eventually cause a split between himself and Chief Buthelezi.
65. There were 4 DSLSC workers at the meeting on 7 October, 1 or 2 on 14 October, and 2 on 21 October 1972. The level of participation of these workers was noticeably lower than in previous meetings.
66. This account is necessarily abbreviated, the DSLSC workers at the meeting on 14 October were possibly overawed by the vociferous debate being conducted by the Grindrod workers.
67. Minutes, 21 October 1972. It does seem unusual that the workers should arrive so much earlier than the latest reporting time, but similar conditions are found throughout industry in South Africa. In the textile industry the workers are concerned that they will get a loom to work that day, as more weavers are employed than looms available. In most industries, however, the very early reporting is a product of the fear of the workers of being dismissed for arriving late. With mass unemployment these fears are real.

68. As many officials of the apartheid state in a similar situation, the officials did not identify themselves, but simply stated they were from the Department of Labour. Their identities were established from subsequent newspaper reports. Natal Mercury, 20 October 1972. Similar functionaries of the state do, however, demand the identity of workers who have the courage to represent the general will of the workers!
69. The issue was far more contentious than it appears. Was 0600 to be regarded as the starting time in law if the workers were required to be present then? At one point the workers stated the Department of Labour officials said there would be eight hours ordinary time a day.
70. The precise details on what happened on Monday are not clear from the minutes of Saturday, 21 October 1972, as the discussion is reported on without a date being mentioned.
71. This remark illuminates the type of relationship between African white collar and manual workers. Despite a relatively small wage increase over the manual workers, the African clerks are often arrogant and bureaucratic in relation to the labourers. Reflecting the class prejudices absorbed in the schools, the clerks like to differentiate themselves from the labourers in dress and manner. There are very few 'office' as opposed to 'factory' clerks in unregistered trade unions.
72. Minutes, 21 October 1972.
73. Natal Mercury, 20 October 1972.
74. The Factories Act lays down a maximum of five hours unbroken work before a work break has to be provided. Technically, the employers were not contravening WD 308 5 (4) b which lays down the meal intervals to be observed by the employers, because these were to be provided if the workers were required to work overtime after 2000. By shifting the hours forward to 0700 and ending overtime at 2000, the employers could legally eliminate the meal break. The morning tea break was not laid down in WD 308 and appears to have been a customary arrangement, but again workers would be required to work a five hour stretch 0700 to 1230 without a break.
75. The GFWBF officials were virtually baffled by the complexity of the issues involved in the changes in hours and what this meant for the hourly earnings of the workers. Was the 0630 reporting time to be included in the working hours? Was a working week of 45 ordinary hours now operating? Had the workers been paid for the tea breaks and meal breaks before the change in hours? Should the workers demand a 40 hour week and a double shift system? It was an inability of the GFWBF officials to understand the changing nature of the exploitation of the workers which was one of the primary reasons for their indecisiveness in providing the workers with a lead. They felt a straightforward wage demand would have been much simpler.

76. Daily News, 18 October 1972
77. Under the hours introduced in December 1971 there were 12 hours and 20 minutes worked each day, ordinary and overtime. Even though the ordinary hours now ended at 1700 instead of 1800, by starting at least 20 minutes earlier, eliminating the morning tea break at 1000 (although there was some dispute about whether all gangs got this break) of about 10 minutes, and the meal break of at least 20 minutes after 1700, there would be more than 12 hours actual time worked. If the reporting time of 0630 is taken, as the workers insisted, as the starting time, the total hours worked would be over 12 hours 30 minutes.
78. That is, unpaid labour in terms of a bourgeois service contract: no extra wages for longer hours. The workers were also conscious of the concept of unpaid labour in the theory of the working class, i.e. that wages were not equal to the value created by their expenditure of labour power.
79. All the local newspapers printed reports that the workers called for Chief Buthelezi, although there can be no question that the man they were demanding was J.B. Buthelezi. The only report which comes near the truth (because it employed an African reporter who spoke to the workers) was the Daily News, 27 October 1972, which found 'that the attitude of the company's chief induna was resented'. The mistake was not accidental, the liberal press encouraging illusions in Chief Buthelezi and not finding it conceivable that an African could be in such a repressive position as J.B. Buthelezi. Despite an attempt to correct this misunderstanding, the error was repeated in an article in Race Relations News, December 1972, and the Survey of Race Relations, 1972.
80. It was quite likely that some workers would have received this amount of leave pay if they had worked for a contract of less than six months, leave pay being calculated on the basis of number of months worked. WD 308 does not necessarily require employers to pay sick pay; 8 (1) iii permits employers to 'set off' the sick pay due to the worker for fees paid by the employers to hospitals or medical services. Similar clauses in industrial agreements and wage determinations are widely used to deprive all workers of the sick pay due to them in terms of the Factories Act and other industrial legislation.
81. This complaint is not as ridiculous as the liberal press tended to make it, beer for the majority of the working class in Europe, for instance, constituting a conventional part of working class diet. The question is also more 'political' than that of the necessary element in the reproduction of labour power; in South Africa, African beers made from sorghum are produced under a liquor monopoly by the municipalities and now administration boards.

82. A small drinking party.
83. Some of the police in squad cars were armed with machine guns.
84. The account of the strike is derived from the Daily News, 23 and 27 October 1972; Natal Mercury, 24 October 1972; Rand Daily Mail, 25 October 1972; as well as from personal observation and reports from black employees of the GFWBF.
85. Lenin (1896), Draft and explanation of a programme for the Social-Democratic Party. CW 2.
86. The tremendous struggle of the stevedores in Cape Town under the harsh regime of contract labour (as are the DSLSC workers) to resist the new hours and to survive as employees of the stevedoring companies, is developed by Maree, SALB 1(8) January-February 1975: 58-63.
87. The workers demands and grievances expressed to the press were item by item identical to those put forward in the underground letter.
88. Natal Mercury, 31 October 1972.
89. These figures demonstrate that the labourers were substantially under-represented, and that what was being formed was not strictly a 'works committee' in terms of the Bantu Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act but rather a 'liaison committee' as defined by the amending legislation in 1973, i.e. one convened and chaired by management.
90. Sack, 1: 62
91. Minutes, 7 October 1972.
92. Minutes, 4 November 1972. Sack, 11: 29, muddles the question of the dismissal of workers after the strike because he has not grasped the role of J.B. Buthelezi. None of the workers who were forced to resign immediately after the strike were connected with the GFWBF or apparently with any groupings in the DSLSC, the victimizations which were to follow were the crucial ones. Sack develops an argument that the strike was caused by factionalism among the workers, one section loyal to the King and the other to Gatsha Buthelezi, and that the grievances of the workers were 'basically groundless'. (p.26). In his paper he does, however, relate that some workers were involved in 'fingering' the militants and informing on them and this could well be a coterie around J.B. Buthelezi.
93. Natal Mercury, 4 November 1972. This article was discussed at the meetings of 7 and 11 November and it was agreed to write a letter refuting the claims that the workers paid nothing for accommodation and were provided with 'appetising' food. The letter was to be written by the workers and translated before being sent to the Natal Mercury editor. At the meeting on 11 November it was reported

that the letter had been sent directly to the editor, but it was not published. Sack, II, seems to rely on this glowing report on conditions in the DSLSC compound which refuted the workers' claims and the criticism of the company implicit in much of the reporting in the Daily News.

94. Natal Mercury, 18 November 1972. Later he said the wages were a disgrace and perpetuated the practice of sweated labour and gave substance to other countries' accusations against South Africa. Natal Mercury, 27 November 1972.
95. Daily News, 24 November 1972.
96. The GFWBF officials were slow to respond to the recommended wages with agitational material pointing out the contradiction between the workers' demands and the recommendations, particularly on the question of hours. WD308 did not even stipulate a 45 hour week for the docks even though the SARH had already implemented a 'five day' week throughout all South African docks; it simply left the hours of work at 48 a week. The employers made a point of arguing they were prepared to retain the 45 hour week as a concession to the workers!
97. Among the workers who were victimized was the one who said at a meeting on 9 (?) September 1972 that he would be victimized by his contract not being renewed. He was fired on the date of termination of his contract during this week.
98. Natal Mercury, 24 November 1972. There had, of course, been numerous telegrams and telephone calls made directly to his office, and significantly the letter promised never arrived. Like most Bantustan politicians at this time, Dladla was involved in extensive tours of Europe and the United States arguing why the 'historic compromise' with the apartheid state had been necessary. It was only after receiving vehement criticism for his support of the KwaZulu Bantustan overseas and after the mass strike had shown the workers would move ahead independently of the African petty bourgeoisie that Dladla came to champion the cause of African trade unionism.
99. Sack, II: 26-30. Because Sack muddles the forced resignation of 14 workers on the date the strike was crushed (Tuesday, 24 October 1972) with the victimizations which took place on the week preceding Friday, 24 November 1972, when 15 workers were reportedly dismissed (the workers claimed many more had been victimized), it is quite unclear which group of workers Sack is referring to as dominantly from the Ngoya district. This factual confusion does not, however, detract completely any significance from his argument, or his disclosure of an informer and spy network within the DSLSC.

100. These quotes are from Sack, II : 27.
101. There are many other logical fallacies in Sack's arguments: if those who were victimized were of the King's faction why would they be foolish enough to appeal to J.B. Buthelezi's nephew? Why should not the King make a statement demanding J.B. Buthelezi end his oppression of the workers if he had nothing to lose and the support of all the African stevedoring workers to gain? From the evidence of the workers some rebuke was given to J.B. Buthelezi in August, but his reappearance afterwards shows that whatever differences there were were patched up possibly on a mutually beneficial basis.
102. Two of the workers lived in the African townships around Durban and managed to get other employment without much difficulty. Another worker managed to get employment at Richards Bay and attempted to form a branch of the GFWBF there. The one worker who did come from Ngoma and came in to the GFWBF offices had been endorsed out. All workers who were victimized and stayed on in Durban were provided with food hampers from a friendly registered union. The Grindrod workers made a collection for their support.
103. A hostel area near Mobeni industrial estate. The information provided by the clerk was corroborated by three other workers in the vicinity of the offices.
104. Minutes, Meeting 25 November 1972.
105. Virtually all these demands and objections were published in a news report in the Natal Mercury, 1 December 1972. Dreyer's response, which is an attempt at a detailed refutation of the demands on hours and wage envelopes, was published on the following day. Natal Mercury, 2 December 1972.
106. Minutes, 2 December 1972. The Charter and articles were eventually not published for reasons which are not clear.
107. Minutes of meetings, 9 December 1972, 15 December 1972, 13 January 1973.
108. Minutes of meeting, 15 December 1972.
109. When Saturday work was reduced (it was never entirely eliminated) the hours of work on Friday were extended by up to one hour extra overtime.
110. Minutes of meeting, 24 January 1973.
111. There was some debate among the workers whether the groups of armed uniformed men were the police, army or navy. Possibly the confusion was caused by the first deployment inside South Africa of new paramilitary units in camouflaged uniforms, although there may have been occasions when the army and navy made displays of force in the docks.

112. See Douwes Dekker, 1975; Boulanger, 1974, IIE, 1974.
113. House of Assembly Debates, 1973. No. 11, Cols. 687-690. Many strikes took place at small factories which were not likely to be included in the statistics, so the total number of strikers was likely to be considerably larger and represent the overwhelming majority of African factory workers in Durban and Pinetown.
114. Minutes of meeting, 17 February 1973.
115. Ibid.
116. The state officials and employers argued the workers were ignorant and illogical in saying that anything had been agreed at the Wage Board sitting. The workers made use of the sitting in subsequent disputes to say that their arguments had not been contested by the employers and therefore agreed. The workers' argument was strengthened by the employers' response to their demands as reported by the Daily News, 18 July 1972: 'A spokesman for the employers told the board the wage demands were justified and should be met.' The employers were, of course, referring to the vague pleas of J.B. Buthelezi and not to the R18 a week demand of the workers.
117. Minutes of meeting, 17 February 1973.
118. The 'free' form of labour which the togt system represented; the 'freedom' for a togt worker to have employment on any day or not is by this stage being seen by the weekly paid workers as degrading. Whenever the police arrived at a dispute or strike in the docks the workers taunted the employers by calling themselves 'prisoners'. Prison labour is used extensively in the dock area to supplement the SARH workers and is housed at Point Prison, near the DSLSC compounds. Letter from Grindrod stevedores to GFWBF, 12 December 1972.
119. Minutes of meeting, 27 January 1973. The 'abnegation' of the worker representative was also related to a shift in leadership among the Grindrod workers towards those who were having a larger role in speaking at the works committee meetings; there was a tendency for the younger, more literate, workers to be more capable of pressing the workers' demands in the possibly intimidating atmosphere of an employers' 'consultative committee'. The somewhat older leadership, quite as representative of the workers and as militant became overshadowed by their incapacity to read minutes and make notes. Among all workers public disclosure of illiteracy can be deeply humiliating, and the humility of the younger worker was partly to demonstrate his lack of ambition against the older leadership.
120. Minutes of meeting, 3 March 1973. For the worker who was beaten up the issue was by no means closed and the GFWBF officials got in contact with lawyers on his behalf to take up a case of assault. The

main, and most obvious, difficulty was that the security police did not identify themselves.

121. The Wage Board did not have the courtesy to reply to the well-drafted and typed objections to the recommendations.
122. Minutes of meeting, 20 January 1973. A collection had also been made after the Point members were victimized. Apparently Dladla was in hospital with a lung infection during the strikes; he was in poor health and eventually died in 1978.
123. Bantu Labour Relations Regulation Amendment Act of 1953.
124. The GFWBF officials wavered between condemning the works committees outright and destroying their influence (which would not be a very difficult task in most factories where workers consider they are a fraud) and posing instead the mass mobilization of workers in independent trade unions, or being reduced to making tactical use of the works committees to secure some basis for workers' association within the plant. Policy was eventually made which specifically prohibited officials from encouraging works committees where there was the possibility of trade union organization to distinguish the growing independent trade unions from the 'stages of trade union' concept of the Urban Training Project. In practice, employers were becoming active in forming liaison committees, and the independent trade unions have now adopted strategies of taking over these committees as a voice for the union in the factory.
125. Daily News, 4 December 1972.
126. Minutes of meeting of DSLSC workers, Saturday, 31 March 1973. There were, of course, assaults taking place on DSLSC workers before this time but what seems significant is that at Grindrods this was a burning question whereas it had not previously been brought up as a grievance by the Point workers.
127. As workers in trade unions in the United Kingdom, so the Grindrod workers insisted on being able to gauge the feelings of their fellow workers rather than making individual autonomous decisions. The added point about a show of hands is that many of the workers are illiterate.
128. There were 22 questions addressed to the employers on the meeting of 26 September 1973 and only the most important are mentioned here. At a meeting on 11 September 1973 there were 11 questions, including 'too many bosses' to which the response was 'The Company is investigating this point and will do all possible to improve the position'.
129. 'Points raised by works committee at liaison meeting', 11 September 1973 and 26 September 1973.
130. Minutes of special committee meeting held at Mr. Bennett's office on 10 July 1974.

131. Even the stevedores themselves were forced to rely on the press for information on what was happening in the docks. The circulation of information of this nature caused much resentment from employers and the state which realized that workers were becoming able to communicate among themselves in the most public manner. While previously the news of strikes could be repressed, with the mass strikes the news of strike action was as important to all classes of society as to the strikers themselves.
132. In What is to be done? Lenin describes how he had to spend weeks examining a worker to get material for a description of just a single factory. He argued that the legalization of the trade unions would relieve revolutionaries of having to burden themselves with such detailed study. 1975: 187 fn.

## CHAPTER 9

### Class action and consciousness

Nearly 20,000 dockers in eight West German seaports went on strike yesterday in support of higher wage claims. It is the first organised stoppage in Germany's North Sea and Baltic ports for 82 years.

The Guardian, 26 January 1978

Many researches have been undertaken to trace the historical stages through which the bourgeoisie passed, from the commune up to its constitution as a class. But when it is a question of gaining a clear understanding of the strikes, combinations, and other forms in which the proletarians are achieving, before our eyes, their organization as a class, some are seized with genuine fear, while others display a transcendental disdain.

Marx (1975) : 160

A study of the history of class formation and action in the Durban docks provides an extraordinarily rich source of material on the nature of the African working class, class consciousness, and the relationship between working class action and the struggle against the apartheid state. The advantages of studying a particular group of workers over a long period are those of establishing objective criteria for evaluating the level of proletarianization of workers whom capital has deliberately recruited from the most remote and politically 'backward' and 'tribal' areas, both their dependence on wage labour for survival and their consciousness of their oppression. By studying the concrete, the precise relationships between the exploitation of the working class in South Africa and the operation of state policies are particularly well illuminated; points of detail (such as the implementation of the tax system) often exposing crucial issues which are often ignored in the development of research into the political economy of apartheid. This method of approaching the organization of the African working class also gives us some insight into the relationship of different elements of the working class to each other; 'leading' and 'following', migrant and urban, supervisors and supervised. It also provides a necessary focus for a study of a decisive group of African workers for a period over a century which helps us to assess the relative maturity of the African working class in opposing the interests of their employers and the state. The actions of the employers and the state are placed in the perspective of a continuing struggle between capital and labour, responding to the advances made by the workers with repression and 'strategic reforms' which secured the continued domination over the workers in the docks and elsewhere. Yet the dock workers have to be seen in relation to the working class as a whole. From the colonial period to the present, their weight within the working class has tended to decline although their power to paralyze the movement of cargo in and out of Durban has increased in significance as Durban has developed as the major port of South Africa.

The danger in isolating the specific and particular is that the subjects appear as particularly outstanding figures against a general struggle of African workers against their oppression which is not fully developed here. They can also appear as uniquely different from the conditions of other dock workers in other countries and continents. What is argued, although it is not possible to present the comparative evidence in all its detail, is that the dockers in Durban are part of the international working class united by capital, raising many of the demands of dockers in the United Kingdom, United States, or India, as well as the demands for the abolition of the apartheid state. Without raising the industrial demands of dockers they would appear as 'uncommitted' as workers, as transient casuals, as 'peasants in the city' attempting to limit wage labour only to the immediate needs of themselves and their families. And without championing the general resistance of the African people against all forms of national oppression, the workers would appear as bounded by economic demands in an egotistical struggle for piecemeal advance. With the growth of world trade on an extensive basis in the nineteenth century a world-wide division of labour took place, and the struggle of workers such as the dockers, who are closely affected by the waves of slumps and booms tends to follow similar patterns on a world-wide basis. The early and exploratory offensives of the late nineteenth century were followed by desperate resistance during the depression, advances during the Second World War, and strong resistance to containerization from the late 1960s. Although the dockers in Durban have not marched in step with workers in the advanced capitalist countries in all phases of expansion and contraction of world trade (and particularly in resistance to containerization), in broad outline the peaks and troughs of working class action in the docks correspond with those elsewhere. Isolated by the controls imposed by capital, by language, and by distance, from the workers' leaders in docks particularly (as well as from political working class movements) in other continents, the dock workers in Durban have nevertheless conducted similar struggles against their employers and states.

This perspective is denied by an approach which considers that forms of working class action in the periphery of the world economy are fundamentally dissimilar from those in the advanced capitalist countries, as advanced in the theory of the 'Third World Strike'. At its most developed, it has been argued that 'the trajectory of capitalist development in the Third World is quite dissimilar to that of the metropolises', and that this presupposes fundamentally dissimilar forms of class struggle. Since capitalism has developed by conserving non-capitalist forms of production which are constantly being undermined by commodity relations, strike action by African workers can be seen as a struggle to force capital to compensate for use-values destroyed through the extension of capitalist relationships.<sup>1</sup> Capitalism does not revolutionize social relationships in the non-capitalist sector. 'There is no way in which sustained economic growth in the periphery can be seen to "free" the working class from the particularism of "archaic" relations: that is, freed from the heterogeneity of relations that characterised the conditions of their production and reproduction during earlier periods of industrialization and capitalist development.' The apparent similarities between working class action in the advanced capitalist countries and in underdeveloped countries are superficial and conceal the more fundamental dissimilarities which are permanent. The African working class thus remains underdeveloped and powerless, tied to the reserves through reciprocal obligations and kinship networks.

Although employing a language modified by the current debates on the nature of capitalist relations within South Africa, the argument expresses a similar view to other writers who describe the African working class as incompletely developed, as stunted by the myriad of controls exerted over the working class by the apartheid state, and incapable of class action and consciousness on the scale of the working class in developed capitalist societies. Ironically, the very development of the intervention of the state into all aspects of the mobility of labour, the purchase and sale of labour power, which is described as one of forced labour for black workers, is used as an argument to

reinforce the notion of a helpless and 'unconscious' African working class. If proletarianization is the product of the intervention of the state in forcing African workers into wage labour, then the largest section of the working class in South Africa is inherently unstable, will be unable to put forward industrial demands, and will participate in the struggle to abolish the apartheid state only as a significant component of the African people as a whole who suffer under this state. The corollary of forced labour is an undifferentiated and massified group of workers quite incapable of sustained class action. The argument tends to over-emphasize the vitality of non-capitalist production in the reserves and to describe the African working class as predominantly migrant, the most popular phrase being 'peasant-workers'. This approach concentrates on the impermanence of the African working class, its subjugation and oppression, without developing the contradictions in the political economy of apartheid — the massive growth of the working class and the crisis of profitability. 'They see in poverty nothing but poverty, without seeing in it the revolutionary, subversive side, which will overthrow the old society.'<sup>2</sup> Because of the single-minded study of African workers from the reserves ignoring the rapid development of the urban working class, the African working class has become characterized as 'peasant-workers'. (The urban/rural distinction within the African working class, or indeed the wide variety of national origins of the African workers in South Africa is, of course, not the essential question in a discussion of the unity of the African working class and its class consciousness but the point needs to be made because of the exceptional omission of the urban African working class from much of the literature of Marxist writing on South Africa.) At its extreme, a view of the level of proletarianization derived from an articulation of modes of production, capitalist and non-capitalist, results in the conclusion that the African working class 'are not workers in the real sense'.<sup>3</sup> The particular form of proletarianization of African workers in South Africa and the denial of urban residence to the majority of African workers makes such an absurd view possible. By understanding that proletarianization has resulted through the limits on land ownership com-

pelling African workers to engage in wage labour, the possibility is raised that the liberation of black people from serfdom and the return of the land to the people could recreate pre-capitalist forms of wealth and re-establish the peasantry. Although this is an extreme formulation, this concept lies behind the 'intermediary terminology' applied to the black proletariat. Woddis argues that in Africa imperialism has destroyed the existing communal villages and subsistence agriculture and left the masses impoverished. Imperialism has 'plunged the African peasant down to the utmost depths of poverty and disaster, producing as a result that peculiarly African phenomenon, the continually migrating peasant-worker, confronted with the "loss of his old world" yet "with no gain of a new one".'<sup>4</sup> The precise method by which the capitalist state and employers maintain this form of migrant labour and reasons why the whole system does not disintegrate are not developed. The terminology has, however, been taken up in relation to the black proletariat in South Africa, in particular to agricultural and mining workers, and reproduces a notion of a stunted working class unable to secure its independence within the national movement and lacking the capacity of developing political class consciousness.

A contrary position has been to deny any difficulty in assessing the proletarianization of African workers. Mhlongo, for example, states that South Africa presents a 'unique spectacle' in relation to the rest of Africa, Asia and Latin America in that there are no peasants. 'Much rubbish has been written on what has variously been referred to as "semi-peasants", "neither peasants nor workers", "landless peasants", and so forth.'<sup>5</sup> He argues that the term 'landless peasant' is as meaningless as 'capital-less capitalist', that 'semi-peasants' do not exist, and that 'neither peasants nor workers' describes a state of non-existence.<sup>5</sup> For Mhlongo, the formation of a black proletariat completely separated from the land is unproblematic, and all terms which detract from the concept of a fully developed proletariat are guilty of limiting the role of the proletariat in the struggle for liberation

in South Africa. Any study of the maturity of the black proletariat in South Africa has, however, to take the material conditions of its reproduction into account, and to develop a fully theorized account of its development. A full discussion of the struggle of the black proletariat for the emancipation of all people in South Africa has to take into account the development of migrant into contract labour and the attempt by the apartheid state to maintain the workers' link to the land. Politically this policy now takes the form of the creation of the Bantustans and the corresponding policy of turning black workers into aliens in the centres of capital accumulation.

As has been argued in the preceding chapters, the massive intervention of the state in the control over the African working class has proceeded as a response to the struggles of African workers. The upward movement of wages in the 1870s in the Durban docks was met with the togt regulations, the strikes and resistance to the employers at the turn of the century by amended regulations, and the formation of the DSLSC itself dictated by the necessity to curb the 'runaway' militancy of the stevedores and to provide long-term solutions to the problem of control. Every extension of the state and employers' organization into the monolithic structures of the 1960s was an attempt to secure domination and efficient exploitation for the next period of struggle, management finding new contradictions with every phase of 'absolutism'. The conditions of the workers' subjugation, their perpetual migrancy, are determined by the response of employers and the apartheid state to the struggle of the workers as well as a general policy of maintaining a cheap labour force. So far from the nature of the African proletariat being determined by the imposition of exacting controls by the apartheid state, the contrary tendency is demonstrated: the activities of the apartheid state arising from the level of proletarianization and struggle of the African working class.

The relations of domination over the workers in stevedoring are not a straightforward extension of the legal-bureaucratic regulations over a powerless

section of the working class, but rather a dynamic manipulation of the instruments of control by employers and the state (the power to dismiss, the pass system, calling in the police, etc.) to constantly re-establish domination. Given the evident lack of success of the stevedoring workers in transforming their conditions of labour and the steady extension of the powers of the state and employers, it could be argued that strike action is a 'blunt weapon' in the struggle against apartheid and exploitation. This has been argued by Gann who presents the African working class as incapable of disciplined national collective action; 'at present, the black labour force in South Africa is politically too isolated, too heterogeneous in character, too poorly organized and occupationally too unstable'. Strike action can always be neutralized by the 'great reserve army of migrant labour' from beyond South Africa's borders and from the Bantustans.<sup>6</sup> The strikes which do take place have also been presented as grossly economistic and readily diverted from political resistance, 'easily manageable' and 'quickly dealt with' by management.<sup>7</sup> These theorists devalue the contribution to the struggle against national oppression and exploitation made by the African working class, and make strike action appear as a number of isolated incidents having no particular significance.

But despite the harsh disciplining of the stevedoring workers through dismissals, police action and the use of the unemployed to replace strikers, employers have not been able to immunize the trade from the pressure working class action has had on the rate of exploitation.<sup>central to, but not the sole determinant of, profit in stevedoring.</sup> Quite decisive changes are evident over a long period in the relationship between the mass of wages and the mass of profits, surplus value/variable capital (s/v). The high rates of surplus value extracted from the stevedoring workers in earlier periods are no longer possible even though unemployment has reached unprecedented levels and the powers of the employers and the state have been vastly extended.

Table 9.1

Rate of exploitation in stevedoring

	Mass of wages (R000)	Profits (R000)	s/v %
1938	246	98	40.0
1962/63	2,205	636	28.8
1970	6,278	887	14.1
1975	21,726	3,162	14.6

(Sources: WBR on unskilled labour, stevedoring trade, Census of Transport, 22-01-01)

The surprising decline in the rate of exploitation in stevedoring during the period of strike action and enforced decasualization (roughly from the 1940s to 1960s), and again in that of resurgence of strike action, indicates that working class resistance has compelled the companies to lower the amount of unpaid labour extracted from the workers. This has occurred despite the enormous weight of impoverishment and bureaucratic control shifted on to African workers in the whole period under review. In part the companies have responded by raising the productivity and intensifying the labour of the workers, bringing profits/worker up to R722 in 1975 from R119 in 1962/63. But over the same period wages were increased tenfold while profits only five-fold. An increase in the mass of profits was only possible with a decline in the rate of profit.

These statistics indicated that for capital in stevedoring there were limits to the exploitation of labour expressed by working class resistance. Despite the politico-legal restrictions on the African working class which

rendered the workers ultra-exploitable, the enormously high level of exploitation possible in previous periods could not be sustained. The increasing restrictions over African labour (with, for example, the DSLSC) were made 'necessary' to capital to be able to prevent further decline in the rate of profit.

For the stevedoring workers, as <sup>for</sup> other migratory workers, wage labour is the principal occupation. By the early 1960s from the moment African migrants first entered employment, wage labour comprised more than two-thirds of male workers' active labour time.<sup>8</sup> Migratory workers are integral to the working class in South Africa not only in terms of the labour time allocated to wage labour, but also in terms of their participation in the political and industrial struggles of the black working class. 'Ignoring migratory workers as part of the working class would amount to recognizing a possibility of capitalist production without the working class, which, naturally, is absurd.'<sup>9</sup> The objective conditions of the proletarianization of African workers having been established, the decisive question of the subjective factors, the class consciousness of migrant workers in particular, remain to be developed.

### Class consciousness

The question of the class consciousness of the African working class is necessarily related to the conditions in which the class struggles and reproduces itself. The consciousness of African workers is both a produce of their harsh experience of the discipline of capital in the labour process as well as the totality of their oppression under the capitalist state. The dialectical relationship between the experiences of African workers as 'labour units' in production and in society have been the cause of misunderstanding of the nature of class consciousness in apartheid society. At one level the very efficiency of control over African workers by the state and their perpetual migration has retarded class consciousness; at another level national

consciousness is seen as a substitute for class consciousness. Repression and labour migration, to deal with the first issue, have, it has been argued, seriously retarded the consciousness of migrant workers.

The perpetual rotation of Africans under intensive police surveillance has had a crippling effect on African labour and political organization. The fear of being 'endorsed out' of towns has been a major deterrent to mass action against apartheid. Labour migration accordingly delays the process of consolidating Africans into a class-conscious proletariat.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst it is undoubtedly true that the aim of state policy is to suppress class consciousness, the question is whether uniform ideological subordination has been achieved, and whether there has been any greater acceptance of the rule of capital with its harsher implementation. These questions are closely bound up with the nature of the oppression and exploitation of African workers: do African workers merely reflect national consciousness as a direct response to the oppression of the racist state?

It has been argued that black workers are subjected to the most exacting exploitation and oppression by capital in the form of racial labour legislation. The intensity of exploitation and the form which the legalized oppression takes has led to the concept of the superexploitation of African workers arising from the 'colonial' nature of apartheid society. The superexploitation of African workers is more than simply the fact of a higher rate of exploitation of the working class than in advanced capitalist countries. 'African workers', it is argued, 'are exploited both as a class and as a race ... national consciousness supersedes class consciousness, but serves the same purpose. National antagonism is a form of class antagonism in South Africa.'<sup>11</sup> This formulation equates nationalist ideology with class consciousness as a form of 'proletarian nationalism' and makes the development of class consciousness unproblematic.

The class consciousness of African workers is inseparably linked with class action and, it has been argued, the ruthless extension of state power against the working class in South Africa is bound up with the resistance of the workers and the level of proletarianization. If, for example, African workers returned 'automatically' to the land after completing a contract there would not be the need for the vast apparatus of control, which the liberal bourgeoisie often complains is so expensive and destructive of good 'race relations'. While extreme oppression does not necessarily produce an equal and opposing resistance, both industrial and mass strike action since 1972 should disabuse any ideas that African workers see themselves as helpless before their employers and the state. The actual consciousness of the African working class is a response to the overall level of class struggle within society as well as a view of their day-to-day exploitation.

It is not a question of what this or that proletarian or even the whole proletariat momentarily imagines to be the aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is and what it consequently is historically compelled to do. <sup>12</sup>

The distinction between the immediate state of mind of the working class and the goal of the working class in abolishing all forms of exploitation and oppression is important in relation to dock labour. The relationship between the actual and the essential, it will be argued, can only be established through the concrete movement of the working class, in ideological and material resistance to capital. The manifestation of this consciousness does not come from the attitudes of the workers alone, important though this is in understanding their aspirations, but from class action and organization. In this sense the historical struggles of the workers are as germane to the question of consciousness as the immediate resistance to the employers.

The questions of the actual consciousness of the dock workers involve a number of related issues: an understanding of their exploitation by their employers, a sense of their historical struggle as stevedoring and African

workers, development of a critique of capitalist arguments, solidarity in resisting their employers, and an understanding of their oppression by a capitalist state. All these questions are brought together in collective action such as strikes which mark an explosion of working class aspirations, often accompanied by a leap in consciousness. Without these elements of consciousness being expressed by the workers, one could not detail their consciousness with any confidence, except as national consciousness of African people under the apartheid state.

For bourgeois industrial relations theorists the high level of strike action among dock workers internationally has posed a problem of exploitation. Why should groups of workers such as dockers, seamen, miners and textile workers have a persistently higher strike record? For Kerr and Siegel who studied evidence from eleven countries economic and technological factors were insufficient to explain 'the bulk of the facts' and they chose to stress 'the location of the worker in society'.

The miners, the sailors, the longshoremen, the loggers, and, to a much lesser extent, the textile workers form isolated masses, almost a 'race apart'. They live in their own separate communities . . . These communities have their own codes, myths, heroes, and social standards. There are few neutrals in them to mediate the conflicts and dilute the mass. All people have their grievances, but what is important is that all the members of each of these groups have the same grievances. 13

These workers readily develop a consciousness of collective grievance, have a strong attachment to their unions, and are insulated from 'societal norms deprecating overt industrial conflict', i.e. forms of bourgeois ideology. The idea of solidaristic working class action based on communities is not unattractive, but it will be argued, is not the principal reason for the ability of workers like dockers to sustain a determined struggle against the employers. The unvarnished nature of exploitation in the docks, it is argued, leads to a high level of consciousness among the workers. Although the stevedoring workers are

separated and isolated from other industrial workers in compounds, a 'community' of workers <sup>struggles to survive</sup> under the direct control of the employers and in the absence of women and children. Although from the 1920s and possibly earlier, the stevedores referred to themselves as inyati (in Zulu, buffalo, i.e. strong men), this 'self-consciousness' is derived directly from production. It is also arguable whether all stevedores have identical grievances; from the 1950s onwards the employers have insisted on differentiating the work force and there has been a definite increase in 'occupational' demands, particularly by winchmen.

Unlike factory production where the extraction of surplus labour is mediated through machinery which can be set to increase the pace of work, in dock labour the low level of mechanization partially 'demystifies' the exploitation of the workers. The capitalists are seen by the workers to be making profits directly from the 'pure' expenditure of labour power based on the physical strength of the workers. In 1961/62 the total amount of capital employed could be replaced, for example, by allocating profits to reinvestment for eighteen months. Because of the low level of mechanization and the central importance of the gang in production, the dock workers have a relatively advanced consciousness as they see themselves as 'instrumental' (the chief instruments of production) in the labour process in the docks; their labour is central to all work in landing and shipping cargo. The view of the workers was expressed at a stevedore meeting by one who said: 'We are not scared of work. We have built the companies which have grown big with the money they get from our work but they don't feel any shame for the workers.'<sup>14</sup> In an industry where management is so transparently primarily concerned with the command over the workers, the resistance of the workers to managerial control is likely to be correspondingly high. The workers have a keen sense of their historical position in resistance to the employers and the state despite the 'purges' which have accompanied strike action. During the phase of open organization in the GFWBF many workers brought in old union cards and

some even had strong memories of the Industrial and Commercial Union which flourished in Durban in the late 1920s.<sup>15</sup> Strikes served as highwater marks in the workers' struggle even when defeated and the 1969 strike which was followed by mass expulsions from Durban was constantly remembered by the workers as an example of the savagery of the DSLSC and the support given the company by the apartheid state.

All the components of class consciousness converge during strike action, a time when the worker-intellectuals put forward the arguments of the workers and demolish those of the employers. The shouted exchanges during the 1972 strike by leading workers blending in the mass gives some indication of the vitality of intellectual resistance among the workers, exposing the contradictions in the position of management and presenting detailed alternative demands. The workers' critique of the apartheid state as a capitalist state is less developed than the thorough demolition of the arguments of the employers although it was the stevedoring workers who championed resistance to the new tax system in 1969 without assistance from organizations outside the companies. Again it was the stevedores who demanded to see the police officers to know what they were doing in the docks during the mass strikes and who united strongly when a leading member of the Grindrods' works committee was interrogated and beaten up. The failure of the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie to respond to their demands advanced considerably the workers' understanding of the Bantustans and their importance in maintaining political control over the workers.

The workers' tactics during strike action give further insight into their consciousness. Their maturity is shown by the organization of underground agitation and direction to the strikes. They refused to accept the 'right' of the employers to dismiss workers on strike and shouted down state officials who declared their strikes to be illegal. When threatened during the strikes they refused to resign and return to the rural areas, but as in the case of the 1969

strike stood firm and were subjected to mass dismissals. The wage demands which were made by the workers (particularly those in 1949 and 1972) were considered by the employers to be completely unrealistic, involving an increase in wages of more than 100 per cent. This, however, demonstrates the revolutionary temper of the workers, their demand for a radical transformation of society in their interests.

In the attempts to organize the stevedoring workers in 1972/73 a variety of strategies came to the surface related to the consciousness of the workers. An idea deeply engrained in the minds of the workers is that of a workers' council, a meeting of delegates of workers to discuss the conduct of the struggle, to resolve differences among the workers, and to reach collective decisions. The stevedoring meetings held under the auspices of the GFWBF were strongly democratic, not only because of the 'self-abnegation' of the leadership, but also because the workers are cautious and suspicious of leadership not directly under their control. The stevedoring meetings ran parallel to the drive to get a high level of membership in the GFWBF as a form of trade unionism, but at times there were conflicts between the organizational objectives laid down by GFWBF officials and the democratic decisions of the meetings. The workers insisted, for instance, that all the grievances of the workers be recorded even though the officials argued it was more important to set a definite agenda and objectives for mass organization. At another meeting a black supervisor who had been ostracised from a gang (for what reason is not clear) described how he was also exploited like the other workers. These differences from the objective of mass mobilization set by the GFWBF officials demonstrated a deep yearning among the workers to reach fully democratic decisions and to resolve the issues obstructing the unity of the workers. A cathartic function for the stevedoring meetings was not seen as important by the GFWBF officials, but there was a sense in which the workers were expressing a desire for a different type of organization combined with the trade union aspects of the GFWBF. The closest approximation to the workers' idea of

organization was the workers' council; free assemblies of workers' delegates rather than leaders based on the 'self-direction of production, self-direction of the class struggle, by means of workers' councils'.<sup>16</sup> The difficulties with this form of organization were immense: free, open association being readily infiltrated by spies and informers, an inability to follow a set pattern of making decisions, and most of all an insufficient level of participation to be truly representative of the workers. The open assemblies of delegates in a form of workers' council demonstrated all these problems which Pannekoek does not discuss.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these reservations, the ideas of delegation of authority, working class democracy, and collective decisions, demonstrated the advanced consciousness of the workers. The democratic aspirations of the workers were sharply developed both as a guarantee against the collaborating indunas at work not subject to election or recall, and the experience of strike action at which the workers had refused to be 'fooled' into electing leaders to negotiate with the employers.

### Conclusions

The extreme national oppression of the African workers in South Africa, itself re-defined and developed as a response to earlier phases of resistance, has not submerged class consciousness within an undifferentiated national consciousness. Indeed, it was this class consciousness and independent underground organization which enabled the stevedores to break through the blanket of repression of the 1960s and conduct the agitation which preceded the 1969 strike. It was also the struggle of the stevedoring workers to develop their organization in the GFWBF which brought out the contradictions in national consciousness and demonstrated to other workers the inability and unwillingness of the collaborative African petty bourgeoisie to support their resistance to employers and the apartheid state. Through their independent organization, openly in the GFWBF insofar as it was capable of being a vehicle of the workers'

aspirations and underground in the nuclei of pamphlet and letter writers, the workers showed their awareness of class oppression and exploitation, consistent ideological opposition to the employers' viewpoint especially during strikes, and the ability to develop working class practices such as pickets and a variety of forms of class action such as overtime bans and strikes. Through their total rejection of the induna system the labourers demonstrated their resistance to all forms of capitalist domination, including that of agents suffering the same forms of national oppression.

Despite the extension of the migrant labour system into one of contract labour which forms the basis of national oppression, class consciousness has been accelerated rather than reduced. The expansion of migrant labour, the 'purging' of the labour force during strikes, and the constant victimization of militants has not meant that the consciousness of the workers is a tabula rasa to be imprinted only by the daily facts of national oppression under the apartheid state. The class actions taken by the workers demonstrate a collective memory even over sharply discontinuous periods (for instance, the R14 a week demand resurfaced only two years after the mass dismissals of 1969) and indicate an attempt by the workers to free themselves from the mystifications of capitalist rule: the view that tribal identity is paramount and that the DSLSC is a benevolent company aware of the real interests of the workers, for instance. The high level of strike action and class consciousness show that the apartheid state and the employers have been unable to negate the forward movement by black workers, although they have dealt out punishing blows to the confident assertion of the power of the workers in the docks.

A study of the stevedoring workers provides the basis for an evaluation of whether the apartheid state has been able to suspend proletarianization at a level at which the workers are able to enjoy a subsidy to wages from the reserves and to hold back from collective action with other workers in the urban areas. State policy contains the contradictions of capital: both the attraction (in the

form of taxation) and repulsion ('endorsing out') of African workers into and out of wage labour. But the tenuous land holding of many of the African migrant workers has not produced a situation in which African workers from the reserves are suspended as a 'semi-proletariat'; the state limits on the tendency of capital to repel workers absolutely from the means of subsistence is itself a response to the struggle of the African working class in the cities. The class action of migrant workers in employment, their demands and strike action, contradicts the view of the under-development of this section of the African working class. The view that strike action by African workers is a demand for compensation for the loss of use values in the reserves (which would place an emphasis on the purely material compensation without any conception of a transformation in the consciousness of migrant workers) cannot be upheld from a study of the stevedoring workers. The wage demands were the collective response of both migrant and urban workers (DSLSC and Grindrod workers) and included many important industrial and occupational demands which go well beyond the 'crass economism' of wage demands alone and attempt to limit the powers of the employers.

These struggles have sharpened the contradictions between the workers and the Bantustan governments which are dependent on increased taxation of workers and their political control for survival. The apartheid state expects these regimes to exercise eflux control during a time of massive unemployment. As importantly the Bantustan leadership like Gatsha Buthelezi encourages a type of populist black nationalism which serves as a base for repudiating campaigns of solidarity internationally and attempts to dissolve the contradictions between the African working class and the collaborative petty bourgeoisie.

The long history of struggles by the Durban dock workers demonstrates conclusively that activity by the working class is not ultimately dependent on political liberties which allow open organization in trade unions, although trade unions have enabled the workers to sustain resistance and defend their

achievements. These workers have shown a remarkable ability to organize themselves and put forward demands to transform their conditions of work and the society in which they live. For over a century the dock workers have shown by their actions that they were conscious of their exploitation and oppression and determined to make changes in their interests and in the interests of the vast majority of the working population. While coming into social activity at about the same time as workers in advanced capitalist countries (with demands for higher wages in 1874 and a first strike in 1895), the dock workers in Durban have faced enormous difficulties in being able to develop permanent class organization. During the period of growth of monopoly capital in South Africa, class and national oppression of the African working class has grown out of all proportion in relation to the previous history of capital in South Africa, but so have the numbers and strategic positioning of African workers in production. As the working class in advanced capitalist countries is now entering into a phase of increasing strikes and resistance to the burden of the capitalist crisis, it can be expected that the uneven development of working class activity internationally will be increasingly overcome. In the coming struggles the dock workers of Durban, who have had a decisive part in the initiation of mass working class resistance in South Africa, will be likely to take up a leading role.

### Notes to Chapter 9

1. du Plessis (October 1978): 2 and 7.
2. Marx (1975): 117.
3. The view of Essack, quoted in Tabata (1972): 31.
4. Woddis (1960): 46.
5. Mhlongo (1975): 259-260.
6. Lewis H. Gann (1973), 'Southern Africa - no hope for violent revolution', South Africa International, III (3): 154.
7. Nicholas Petryszak (1976), 'The dynamics of acquiescence in South Africa', African Affairs, 75 (301): 542.
8. Mayer (1962): 89, and van der Horst (1964): 79.
9. Braginsky (1975): 136.
10. Simons (1969): 616.
11. Braverman (1974): 57.
12. Marx (1967): 368 HF.
13. Kerr and Siegel (1954): 191-2.
14. Minutes of meeting, 9 September 1972.
15. It is not clear whether these memories came from direct experience or were passed on, most of the workers who could have been young men at that time would be too old to survive in stevedoring.
16. Pannekoek (1950): 230. Pannekoek develops the theory of workers' councils as a means of revolutionary struggle by the working class, is fiercely critical of 'leaders' and 'intellectuals', and does not provide any theory of seizure of power from the capitalist state.
17. These necessarily abbreviated comments are by no means intended to be a final assessment of the question of workers' councils. The term here is intended more to refer to a popular assembly than carry the connotation of a soviet; all forms of working class organization obviously have to be considered in terms of their relationship to the political organization of the workers and the conditions in which new forms of organization, e.g. soviets, are possible.

CARGO LANDED, WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT, DURBAN 1874-1975

## APPENDIX A

	Wage rate per day R	Employment av monthly	Worker action	Cargo landed	Food price index
1874	0.15	500	Demand increase	-	-
1878	-	800	-	-	-
1879	0.30	900	Demand increase	Zulu War	
1880	-	1,000			
1886		726			
1887		743			
1888		960			
1889		1,175			
1890	0.25	1,560			
1891		1,500			
1892		1,390			
1893		1,204			
1895		1,377			88.4
1896		1,757		545	100.0
1897		2,751		513	98.2
1898		2,326		441	117.9
1899		2,509		521	117.0
1900		2,832		795	110.7
1901		3,790		944	120.5
1902	0.35	4,753	Demanded 0.40	1,103	126.8
1903		5,125	Struck; refused to bunker ships	1,288	126.8
1904		5,116		787	125.9
1905		1,934		748	120.5
1906		1,794		314	123.2
1907		1,172		482	123.2
1908		1,290		437	116.1
1909		1,035		615	112.5
1910		1,636		912	23.8
1911		2,187		867	26.0
1912		2,320		976	27.3
1913		2,325		939	27.7
1914		2,134		755	27.3
1915		1,499		741	29.2
1916		1,615		704	30.3
1917		1,865		574	33.7

Continued.....

	Wage rate per day R	Employment av monthly	Worker action	Cargo landed	Food price index
1918	0.30	-	Demanded R0.50	594	37.1
1919	0.45*		Demanded more	640	37.1
1920	0.40		Struck for R1.00	597	48.7
1921				886	39.6
1922				590	32.4
1923		1,455		712	32.0
1924		1,573		917	32.8
1925		1,663		1,090	32.8
1926		1,628		1,082	32.2
1927		1,626	Strike against tax	1,191	32.3
1928		1,715		1,389	31.9
1929		2,000	Strike against dismissal	1,469	31.5
1930		2,075		1,546	30.1
1931		1,714		1,347	28.6
1932			Strike against wage reduction	1,110	26.2
1933		1,053		879	26.9
1934				1,147	28.3
1935				1,497	27.8
1936				1,769	27.7
1937			Strike for wage increase	2,093	28.0
1938				2,279	29.4
1939				1,992	29.1
1940	0.40			2,032	30.1
1941	0.64		Strike demanded R0.86	2,655	32.3
1942			Strike demanded R0.80	1,830	35.5
1943				1,732	38.6
1944				1,624	40.3
1945				1,529	41.3
1946				1,679	42.3
1947				2,553	44.6
1948			Phungula R2.50 a day demand	2,428	46.0
1949	0.82½		Riot followed by strike demanded R65 per month	3,053	47.3
1950				2,637	50.0

Continued .....

	Wage rate per day R	Employment av monthly	Worker action	Cargo landed	Food price index
1951				2,854	53.6
1952				3,147	62.9
1953				2,669	66.3
1954				2,759	66.8
1955				3,447	69.0
1956	1.25			3,905	70.3
1957				4,244	72.8
1958			No overtime worked	4,571	75.6
1959	1.40		Strike for increase, labour pool introduced	4,269	75.8
1960				4,551	76.4
1961		2,419		4,454	78.6
1962		2,245		4,584	78.2
1963		2,486		4,880	79.0
1964		2,748		6,707	82.6
1965		3,065		8,930	87.5
1966		2,422		9,498	90.7
1967		2,644		4,217	93.9
1968		2,106		2,787	95.4
1969		2,211	Demanded R14.00, strike	2,618	96.9
1970				4,217	101.2
1971				4,561	106.1
1972			Demanded R18.00, strike	3,732	113.6
1973				5,138	131.0
1974				5,796	150.6
1975				5,908	173.1

\* Workers employed bunkering coal.

Sources: Average monthly employment 1874-1933 from Mayor's Minutes of respective years, 1961-1969 from DSLSC figures for July of each year.

Cargo landed in harbour tons 1896-1908 from Reports of the Harbour Master, 1909-1966 from Natal Regional Survey (1969); 1967-75 in metric tons on an unspecified new basis Statistical Yearbook (1971).

Food price index 1895-1909 for Durban 1896 = 100, S.P. 13 p.70; 1910-1975 from Statistical Yearbook (1976) on the base of prices in major urban areas, April 1970 = 100.

## APPENDIX B

## CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE STEVEDORING TRADE

Date	Wage rate	Action by workers, employers and the state
1872		London stevedores form a union. (Pelling, 1977:98).
1874	1s 6d	Workers respond to imposition of togt regulations by demanding higher wages. Refused by the municipality. (Council Minutes).
1878		Togt barracks opened with a public meeting. (Mayor's Minute, 1878).
1879	3s + food	Under the favourable conditions created for strike action during the imperialist war against the Zulu people togt workers refuse to work at the wage rates of the togt regulations.
1880		Point barracks constructed but togt workers refuse to occupy them.
1888		Dockers strike in Hamburg, Bremerhaven, and Rotterdam (1889). (Hobsbawn, 1964: 218).
1889	4s	London dock strike wins 6d per hour, roughly 4s a day for 8 hour day. (Pelling, 1977:98).
1890	2s 6d + food	Togt workers in Durban area earn 2s 6d with food for an eight hour day.
1895	4s a day 6s per trip	Durban dockers strike for 6s a day. (NBBNA, 1895:93).
1902	35s-40s a month	State coordinates attempts to reduce wages, resisted by employers concerned about losing skilled workers.
1902?	3s 6d	Dockers strike for a day in demand for 4s a day, evicted by police from barracks. (SANAC III:28,295).
1903 May		Strikers at St. Paul's wharf arrested for refusing to work. ( <u>Natal Mercury</u> , 1 June 1903).
1903 June		Stevedores employed to load cargo refuse to carry coal. Brought before magistrate and fined. ( <u>Natal Witness</u> , 16 June 1903).

- African workers support demand for 10s a day made by White workers employed in the same jobs. (SANAC III: para. 28,390).
- Stevedores refuse to carry heavy timber. (SANAC III: para. 30,107).
- 1904  
May When accommodation charges are raised from 2s 6d to 5s a month, 811 (about 17 per cent) leave work. (SANAC III: para. 28,171).
- 1906-08 Bambata uprising supported by many Durban workers who take up arms, employers try to hold on to workers in barracks, brutal suppression of resistance and extensive reprisals. (Marks, 1970).
- 1909  
January Beer monopoly established by the municipality and petty brewers closed down. (Native Beer Act, 1908).
- 1915 Compound manager complains of workers drinking and asks beerhalls to be closed 1600-1800. Request refused by municipality.
- 1916  
September State takes over Durban harbour administration 4 years after Railways and Harbour Act, stevedoring separated from wharf railway workers. (NRS, 1969:105).
- 1918      3s a day  
August    6s a night Workers strike for 5s a day and 10s a night and for overtime pay on Saturday afternoon. General grievance of 5s additional dipping fee. Strikers arrested and charged, employers pay £1 fines. (Ilanga lase Natal, 23 August 1918).
- 1919  
16 July Workers bunkering coal strike demanding 4s 6d increase in daily wage. Militants arrested and reprimanded by magistrate who had broken the strike. (Times of Natal, 17 July 1919).
- 17 December Cape Town dockers demand 8s 6d and strike for two weeks: ICU's first and only sustained industrial battle. (Wickens, 1978:28-36).
- 1920      4s a day  
5 March   6s a night  
          £2 5s -  
          £2 10s per  
          month 1,200 dock workers demand 10s a day increase for togt labour and £5 increase for monthly workers. Pickets stop work and occupy wharves until major counter-demonstration by police and South African Mounted Rifles. Demands refused. (Natal Mercury, 6 March 1920; OYB, 4, 1921:321).

- 1925  
14 October  
New poll tax imposed.
- December  
£2 5s -  
£2 7s 6d  
a month  
Cases of 'insubordination' by workers. First case workers refused to work for oppressive white foreman, fined £1 or 14 days IHL. Second case refusing orders of white foreman, fined £2 or one month IHL. (Natal Mercury, 19 December 1925).
- ICU campaigns for national minimum wage of 8s and an end to contract labour.
- 1926  
January  
Workers employed for 15½ hours a day carrying sugar fined £1 or 14 days IHL for dispute with supervisor. (Workers Herald, 15 January 1926).
- 1927  
16 June  
1,500 dock workers strike demanding release of 20 dockers arrested for not paying poll tax. (Natal Mercury, 17 June 1927).
- 1929  
June  
4s 6d  
Workers demand end to beer monopoly and put forward grievances about the compound system. Beerhalls boycotted and compound offices stoned. Police intervene to break pickets.
- November  
Massive police raid coordinated on national basis to regain control over Point barracks and to enforce tax collection. Mass trials of workers follow.
- 1930  
16 December  
Pass burning and attempt to start demonstration through town violently suppressed by police. Johannes Nkosi killed.
- 1932  
2 April  
Workers strike against imposition of 60 hour week and reduction of wages. 788 strikers immediately replaced. (OYB, 15, 1932-33:187).
- 1935  
August  
Demonstration strike against loading Italian ships bound for Italian troops in Ethiopia. (Umsebenzi, 7 September, 1935).

1937 24 April	4s	Workers strike to regain overtime for Saturday afternoon work lost during depression. Win demand. ( <u>Natal Mercury</u> , 26 April, 1937).
1937 12 August	3s	Railway togt workers demand 4s a day and hold up shipping for 14 days. Scabs brought in on monthly contracts. Strike ends without increase, but many strikers re-employed. ( <u>Natal Mercury</u> , 13-27 August 1937, and <u>Umsebenzi</u> , 21 August 1937).
1937 30 August	2s 6d	400 togt workers employed by timber company, W.F. Johnstone and Co. in unloading ships demand 3s 6d. Replaced by monthly contract workers who were granted wage increase. Strike lasts three days, workers sacrificing £150 in wages. ( <u>Natal Mercury</u> , 31 August 1937 and 2 September 1937).
1939 26 May		Togt workers employed by timber merchants strike for two days, sacrificing £60 in wages. (ARDL, 1939, and OYB (21), 1940:258).
1939	4s a day 6s overtime or nightshift	Wage Board investigation.
1940	4s	Wage determination includes stevedores as 'unskilled' labour but provides no wage increases. (WBR).
1941 17 August	4s 6d a day + COLA of 6d Overtime 8d per hour Sunday overtime 11d per hour	Workers strike demanding 8s a day. War-time Controller of Industrial Man-Power intervenes and offers wage increases which are reluctantly agreed to under duress.
1942 28 July		Again workers strike for 8s which they claim was promised by employers. After strike of four days workers expelled from urban area under emergency regulations.
- June- December		Strike wave in Transvaal and Natal (Stein, 1978).
1948 June		Workers strike after new regulations introduce penalties for absenteeism, for taking extended leave, and for 'slacking' at work.

- September
- Phungula issues a report on the impoverishment of migrant workers and campaigns for a general strike in support of wage demand of £1 5s a day or £32 10s per month. Leadership of African trade unions oppose strike movement.
- 1949  
13 January
- Dock workers participate in riots.
- 1949  
2 May
- Strike of dock, ship painting, baking and milling, whaling, timber, sugar, and chemical workers in support of demand for £32 10s a month. (Natal Mercury, 3 May, 1949).
- 1950
- Railway workers strike demanding increased wages.
- 1951
- 367 railway workers employed at Cato Creek strike.
- 1952  
2 June
- Scaling and chipping workers strike for 15.1/4 days.
- 1954
- Congress of the People adopts Freedom Charter calling for the abolition of compounds and contract labour, and the nationalization of monopolies.
- 1 July
- Stevedoring workers strike for 7 days demanding increases. Workers charged: 95 found guilty and fined 10s each and others discharged. Central Native Labour Board intervenes. (ARDL, 1954).
- 1956  
1 August
- 8s 4d per day  
4s 2d COLA =  
12s 6 a day +  
special  
allowances
- New wage scales prescribed by Central Bantu Labour Board.
- 1957
- Go-slow action by Port Elizabeth dock workers who demanded 25s a day. Workers replaced by convicts and contract labour. (Horrell, 1961:103-104).
- 
- After Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, demands barracks at the Point should be removed employers appeal successfully for exemption.
- 1958  
5 March
- 14s
- SACTU demands £1 5s a day at first Wage Board investigation into stevedoring (WBR, 1958).

- 18 April Workers ban overtime and strike during national stay-away. Increase of 1s 6d a day and 3d an hour overtime granted.
- 1959  
25 February When WD 183 provides no wage increase for labourers while significant rises for indunas, workers, come out on strike. Employers refuse demands for increase and strikers evicted from barracks. Workers guilty of trespassing fined R10.
- 25 March Workers stop overtime to demand increases. Entire labour force expelled from Durban and new workers recruited from Zululand and other rural areas. DSLSC formed in post-strike situation.
- 1961  
27 December Workers employed by Consolidated Stevedoring and Forwarding strike demand annual bonus. Defended by SACTU when 107 workers charged.
- 1965  
30 November Workers employed by C.G. Smith at Maydon Wharf strike demanding increase in wages, tea break, overtime, and overalls. 110 charged with striking on 10 February, 1966, again appeared 14 March, and sentenced to fine of R25. Sentence quashed on appeal, 29 August 1966.
- 1968 Republic Transport Workers' Union demands R16 for labourers at Wage Board investigation. (WBR 1968)
- 1969 Bantu Taxation Act No.92 of 1969 taxes Africans an income above R360 p.a.
- April Workers demand R14 a week and come out on strike. Employers and the state coalesce to break strike with mass expulsions from urban area.
- 1971  
January Port congestion; employers attack job reservation in the holds and on the wharves.
- September Workers again demand R14 and threaten to strike. Employers offer R8.50; an increase of R2.

- 1972  
23 October
- In response to delay in new wage determination and changes in hours workers strike demanding R18 a week, voluntary overtime, shorter working hours, and improved accommodation. Strikers forced back to work after employers' threat of mass dismissal backed by the police. (Daily News, 27 October, 1972).
- 24 October
- Cape Town dockers initiate a ban on overtime in support of unspecified wage demand. Discipline maintained by pickets. (Budlender, 1976:46-48).
- 1973  
January-  
February
- Mass strikes in Durban as workers demand between R20-30 a week. Docks occupied by paramilitary.
- 1974  
5 October
- Dockers in Cape Town refuse to work overtime for a month in support of demand for increased wages. Comes to an end after change in hours which results in decasualization and provides incentive bonuses. (Budlender, 1976:54-55).

## APPENDIX C

PORT WORKERS AND SEAMEN!

PREPARE FOR ACTION

Day by day the conditions at the South African ports become worse. Mass employment resulting in the assembly at all the docks throughout the country of thousands of Dock and Harbour workers, vainly trying to secure employment in the face of the fact that the employed workers are securing only one or two days work a week on the average, reflect the critical situation now obtaining amongst the South African Transport workers.

Further dismissals of Dock and Harbours workers take place at all ports and speeding up the work of gangs, the reduction of the numbers of workers in the gang intensifies the process of exploitation increasing from day to day. The recent increase of the transference of cargo from Capetown Docks to Durban on account of the cheaper labour there, reflects the new attacks on the conditions of the workers; through the increased short time and dismissals at the Capetown Docks and in the tremendously increased speed-up of work at the Durban Docks and also the transference of Durban Native Railway Workers from Greyville to the Docks at Durban on Saturdays to perform extra work without pay, in order to handle the cargo thus diverted from Capetown.

All these attacks on the Conditions of the Dock and Harbour workers are taking place when throughout the world Seamen Dockers and Harbour workers are being increasingly drawn into the Imperialist War activities which at this moment result in the transportation of war materials and troops to crush the heroic struggles of the Chinese workers and peasants who are seeking the revolutionary way out of this crisis of Capitalism, and also for the crushing of the successful building of Socialism in the U.S.S.R. where the workers and peasant are completing their first five year plan and are preparing the second plan which has its objective, the creation of a classless society.

Fellow Dockers, Stevedores, Lightermen, Quay Workers and Coal Loaders.

The increased attack on our standards of life, are manifested in many ways. Whether it is directly through the cuts in wages, speed up dismissals, or through the favouritism in giving out the tickets for work, which

means that work is not evenly distributed, we must fight against these attacks at the same time as we mobilise our determination to prevent the Dockers and Harbour workers being used to further the war activities of the Imperialists. We must organise for action against our miserable conditions of life and work by preparing to set up committees of struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party and the Seamen and Harbour Workers' Union to organise for strike action, which will unit the fight of the Dockers and Harbour workers in all South African Ports against these worsened conditions and against Imperialist War - establishing fighting solidarity with the Seamen and Harbour workers in all the ports throughout the world.

The rumoured new wage reductions have been delayed but we must begin now to prepare action against these reductions which are only in line with the attacks on all other sections of workers in South Africa and which have only been held up because of the clearly demonstrated revolutionary determination of the Dockers and Harbour workers in the struggles at Durban and at Port Elizabeth, and in the determination manifested by the Capetown Dockers and Harbour workers consequent upon the anticipated reduction in wages recently.

In these attacks the role of the reformist union leaders as the Stevedores' Union at Capetown and the I.C.U. at Durban must be clearly understood as that of betrayers who will seek to draw any dispute into the channels of conciliation. Only by building independent committees of action of all workers under revolutionary leadership can effective preparation for strike action be carried.

In the August First demonstrations against War organised by the Communist Party, the Seamen and Dockers throughout the country must begin active strike preparations against the new attacks being planned by the bosses.

Build Committees of Action in every port to fight for:-

Maintenance of a minimum wage scale of 8/1 a day for all workers irrespective of race or colour - quay workers, stevedores, lightermen. Harbour workers, Native coal loaders, etc.

No dismissal of Dock and Harbour workers.

Return of the P.T.O. for all Dock and Harbour workers.

Abolition of the quarter day system. The working day to be divided into two four hour shifts.

The distribution of tickets to be handled through elected committees of the workers. These committees to be composed of Coloured, Native and White Dock and Harbour workers.

A guaranteed minimum wage of 32/- a week for all Dock and Harbour workers working less than four days.

Complete abolition of overtime.

A minimum of thirty workers in each batch.

For the redistribution of cargo now being diverted to Durban, to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and East London.

Compensation at the rate of full wages to be paid by the Stevedoring Companies or S.A.R. & H. to all workers at the Docks in case of accident, injury, sickness during the entire period of employment. Full compensation to be paid to the families of any and all Dock and Harbour workers in case of death.

For the immediate enactment of the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill proposed by Communist Party of S.A.

Refuse to load any ship with men, munitions, stores or supplies for the Imperialist War on China and the U.S.S.R.

Build the Seamen and Harbour Workers Union on a national scale.

Set up Committees of Action in every port to prepare for Strike action.

Umsebenzi, 20 August, 1932.

## APPENDIX D

WAGE DEMANDS OF TRADE UNIONS, 1958

	Labourer	Gangway/winchman	Induna
Durban	R2.50 100	R2.70 108	R3.00 120
Port Elizabeth	R2.50 100	R3.00 120	R3.25 130
Cape Town	R1.90	R2.09½ Gangwayman 109 R2.25 Winchman 118	R2.80 147

Labourer's wage = 100

Source: WBR 1958

DEFINITION OF BULK, DIRTY AND TOXIC CARGO IN WAGE DETERMINATIONS

WD 183, 6 February 1959

Bulk cargo means any cargo such as sulphur, ore or grain which is not packed in containers and which has to be stowed in or removed from a ship in a loose form but does not include a cargo such as timber, steel plates or rods or pieces of machinery which, while not packed in containers, is conveyed by the piece or in bundles, 10c/day.

Dirty cargo means cement, basic slag, yellow ochre, carbon black, soda ash, sulphur or coal, in containers, 10c/day.

WD 251, 24 July 1964

Bulk cargo means any cargo such as grain (other than maize) gypsum, ore, potash or superphosphate which is not packed in containers and which has to be stowed in or removed from a ship in a loose form, but does not include cargo such as timber, steel plates or rods or pieces of machinery which, while not packed in containers, is conveyed by the piece or in bundles, 15c/day.

Dirty cargo means basic slag, cement, carbon black, coal, ochre, soda ash, sulphur, triple superphosphate, whalebone meal, or lucerne meal in hessian bags, or maize in bulk, 20c/day.

WD 308, 3 April 1969

Bulk cargo means any cargo such as grain (other than maize), gypsum, ore, potash or superphosphate which is not packed in containers and which has to be stowed in or removed from a ship in a loose form, but does not include cargo such as timber, steel plates or rods or pieces of machinery which, while not packed in containers, is conveyed by the piece or in bundles, 17c/day.

Dirty cargo means:

- a) basic slag, carbon black, cement, coal, ochre, oxide, soda ash, sulphur, triple superphosphate, wet hides or whalebone meal;
- b) maize or phosphates in bulk;
- c) chalk, clay, lucerne meal or pitch in hessian or paper bags;
- d) asbestos in hessian or paper bags in open compressed bundles, 23c/day.

WD 348, 15 December 1972

Bulk cargo means any cargo such as copper bars when not unitised, gypsum, ore, potash or superphosphate which is not packed in containers and which has to be stowed in or removed from a ship in a loose form, but does not include cargo such as timber, steel plates or rods or pieces of machinery which, while not packed in containers, is conveyed by the piece or in bundles, 21c/day.

Dirty cargo means:

- a) basic slag, carbon black, cement, coal, ochre, oxide, soda ash, sulphur, triple superphosphate, wet hides or whalebone meal;
- b) grain or phosphates in bulk;
- c) chalk, clay, lucerne meal or pitch in hessian or paper bags;
- d) asbestos in hessian or paper bags or in open compressed bundles, 29c/day.

Toxic cargo means cargo which has chemical properties that cause or are likely to cause injury to a human body exposed or coming into contact therewith, 36c/day.

APPENDIX E

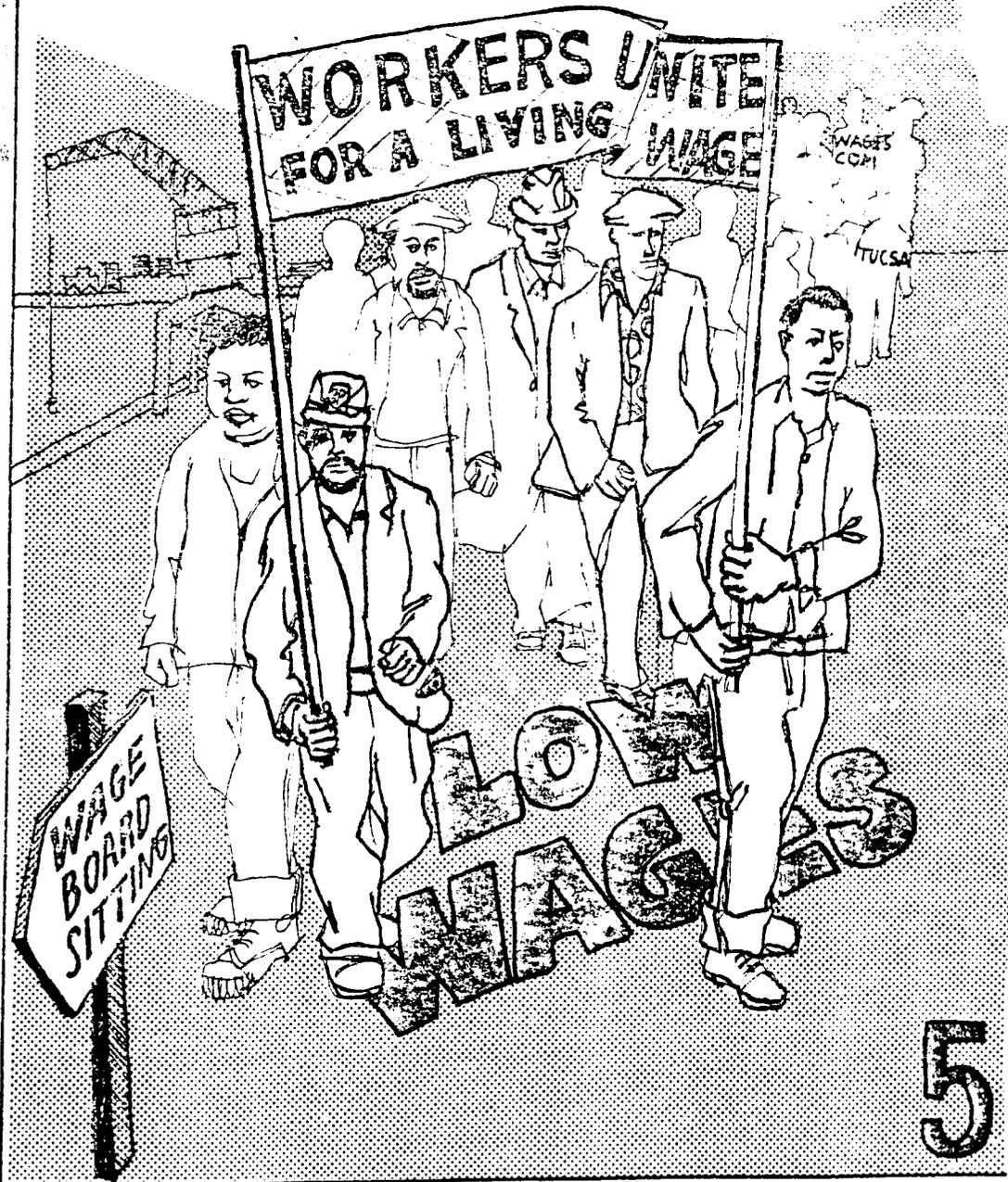
## APPENDIX F

LEVEL AND STRUCTURE OF WAGES, STEVEDORING LABOURERS

Wage Measure	Components of wage	Sample wage* Overtime & Sunday	Earnings	Hourly earnings
WD 183 6 Feb. 1959	Basic wage R6.00 Overtime 22.5c/hr Sunday 83c + 17c/hr	4.34	10.34	18c/hr
- 1963	As above, plus Daily allowance 15c/day	4.34	10.94	19c/hr
WD 251 24 July 1964	Basic wage R6.00 Daily allowance 50c/day Overtime 25c/hr Sunday R1.05 + 19c/hr	5.76	13.76	24c/hr
WD 308 3 April 1969	Basic wage R6.50 Daily allowance 65c/day Overtime 29c/hr Sunday R1.25 + 22c/hr	6.71	15.81	28c/hr
- 1 Oct. 1971	Basic wage R8.50 As above	6.71	17.81	31c/hr
WD 348 15 Dec. 1972	Basic wage R.950 Daily allowance R1/day Overtime 41c/hr Sunday R1.95 + 31c/hr	9.66	23.16	41c/hr
Wage Order 21 Dec. 1973	Basic wage R12.00 Daily allowance R1/day Overtime 48c/hr Sunday R2.30 + 36c/hr	11.30	27.30	48c/hr

\*Basis for calculating a hypothetical wage taken as four days work on Monday to Friday rates, Sunday work added, and 12 hours overtime, making the total number of hours worked 57 per week (5 x 9 = 45 hours normal time + 12 hours overtime = 57 hours). These hours are an attempt at an approximate average working time for a stevedoring labourer. The earnings do not include cargo allowances which were consolidated into basic wages in the 1973 Bantu Labour Wage Order. This consolidation exaggerates the rise in wages between 1972 and 1973.

# ISISEBENZI



# ISISEBENZI 6

## ABASEZITIBITOLO BAFUNA UR18.00 NGESONTO

Ephepheni lethu lokugcina le-Isisebenzi sanika inothisi yomhlangano wo Mnyango weza Maholo (Wage Board) oyokwenzelwa eThekwini. Umhlangano wawu ngo Mhlaka 17 kuJuly. Inhloso yalomhlangano kwakwukuzama ukubeka obala imali encane engase ikhokhelwe abantu abasebenza ezitibitolo obasi babo.

Emhlanganweni kwakukhona abantu abangaphezulu kwama-200 basezitibitolo. Into abayisho kwi Wages Board: "Sifuna nisiholele u R18,00 ngesonto. Asifuni ukusetshenziswa ama-ova ngenkani. Sifuna ukusebenza izinsuku ezinhlanu kuphela ngesonto." Iningi lezisebenzi aliphumelela nga ukuza emhlanganweni we Wages Board. Imbangela yalokhu kushicilelwa leliphephandaba ukwazisa okwenzeka emhlanganweni lezozisebenzi ezingaphumelelanga ukufika.

Ubani owakhuluma emhlanganweni na? Yilaba

(1) Umnuz J B Buthelezi (Ophethe inhlango yasezitibitolo - Durban Stevedoring Labour Supply Co). Wathi umele zonke izisebenzi zenkampani. Lona omele izisebenzi wathini. Akutshela i-Wage Board yilokhu:

- \* Ukuthi abaningi emsebenzini bayalwa nezisebenzi
- \* Ukuthi labantu (esho iWages Commission) bakhapha amaphepha kanti futhi bane ncushuncushu abayidalayo phakathi kobasi nezisebenzi.
- \* Nokuthi izisebenzi aziludingi usizo oluvela ngaphandle.
- \* Nokuthi izisebenzi "zazikancane" kanti futhi ziyadukiswa kalula yilamaphepha esezawafunda.

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