

Southern Africa REPORT

Vol. 8 No. 5

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Unions: The May Day Issue



Trade Union Strategies
South Africa

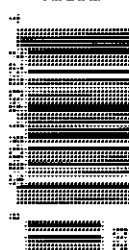
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Canada

Interview with
CAW's Sam Grant

United Steelworkers
Gerry LeBlanc
on
South Africa

Workers Organize
• in Namibia
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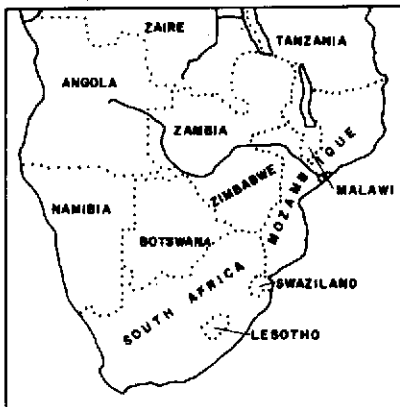
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Contents

Editorial:	
Solidarity Forever?	1
“Mutually searching”	
Trade Union Strategies, South Africa and Canada	3
Defining a Role:	
Trade Unions in Namibia	8
Starting Over:	
Rebuilding the Workers’ Movement in Mozambique	12
Bearing the Brunt:	
Labour and Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe	16
Worker to Worker:	
A Canadian Unionist in South Africa	18
A Constituency for Southern Africa?	
The State of the U.S. Movement	20
AIDS in South Africa:	
The Democratic Movement Responds	25
CIDA Pulls the Plug	28
No Level Playing Field:	
Bruce Kidd in South Africa	31

cover – Poet Mzwakhe Mbuli performs at National Union of Mineworkers rally

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Solidarity Forever?

Solidarity forever? As we have sought, in recent issues of *SAR*, to articulate “new terms of solidarity” to define the links between southern Africans on the ground and people in “the North” who continue to be concerned with southern African-related issues, we have noted two principal themes. One is our mutual concern, South and North, to ground new forms of democratic self-assertion that enable the most progressive forces within civil society – women, workers, cooperatives and civic associations, among others – to empower themselves and have a more profound impact on process and policy. A second is our shared

sense of heightened vulnerability to the machinations of world-wide market forces that seek, in the name of “global restructuring,” “structural adjustment” and “free trade,” to impose their “logic” upon us.

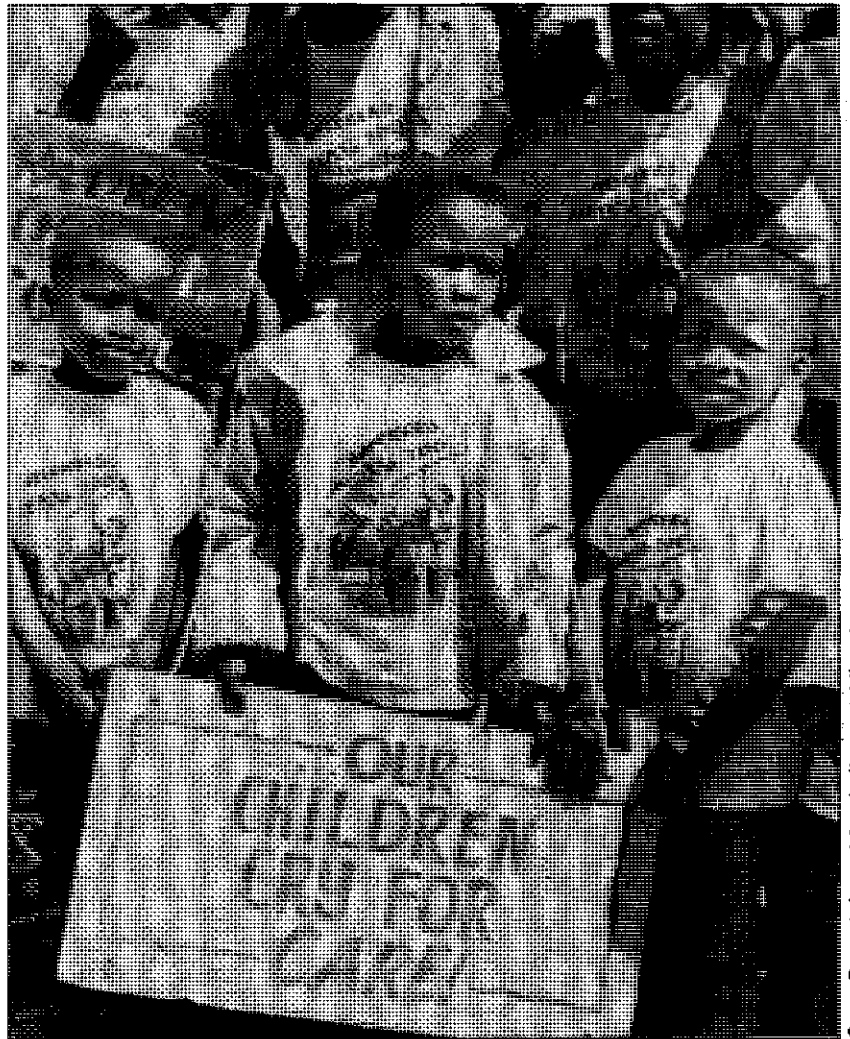
A key social actor, with proven potential to underpin both the drive towards genuine democratization and the challenge to the unfettered run of global capital, is the trade union movement. One virtue of the articles mounted in the present issue of *SAR* is to demonstrate that this is true, not as some abstract deduction from haloed leftist orthodoxy, but in ways that are quite visible at both ends of the South-North nexus.

Building unions capable of focusing an effective working-class presence within the southern African countries isn’t an entirely straightforward exercise, of course. For example, Gretchen Bauer finds Namibian unions still struggling with their own limitations of skills and resources, and with the ambiguities of their relationship to the country’s ruling party (SWAPO), as they seek to define a role for themselves. Meanwhile, as Adriane Paavo shows, Mozambican unions have been freed from the Frelimo party’s too smothering past embrace only to find themselves wrestling with some difficult legacies from that experience.

Moreover, not unlike their counterparts in Zimbabwe (as described by Lloyd Sachikonye), such unions must deal with the accelerating contradictions of an economy in the throes of advanced structural adjustment and acute recolonization.

Perhaps these are the inevitable growing pains attendant upon what is otherwise a promising process of popular empowerment. Time alone will tell. Meanwhile, in South Africa itself, trade unions have long since established themselves as powerful actors within the popular-democratic movement. They have also been seen as, potentially, the cutting edge of resistance to the enforced imposition of a neo-colonial pattern on the post-apartheid economy. But as leading Canadian trade unionist, Sam Gindin, found on a recent working visit to South Africa, this, too, is easier said than done. Interviewed in our pages, he underscores the relentless pressures – epitomized in such terms as “globalization” and “competitiveness” – working against the mounting of equitable and transformative socio-economic policies there. Establishing parallels between the situations that confront workers in South Africa and Canada, he suggests that South African unions have merely bent, not broken, under the weight of such pressures.

More than that, he suggests ways in which South African trade unionists and Canadian trade unionists can deepen their solidarity by drawing out these parallels and trading reflections on their own experiences – diverse experiences to be sure, but framed by the workings of a single global economy. In doing so, he helps put flesh on the bones of the “new terms of solidarity” relevant to the trade union sphere. But so, too, does the moving account by Canadian mineworker Gerry LeBlanc of his visit to South Africa, where he found lessons of his own to bring back and share with his fellow Canadian workers. As Sam Gindin concluded his interview with us: “When



COSATU children's campaign for paternity leave and creches, Sept. 1990

trade unionists meet there is a commitment that develops [and] there's nothing more powerful than that. ... You can mobilize workers around solidarity.” Amen, Brother Gindin.

* * *

As usual, there's also more than our thematically-linked articles in the present issue. Bruce Kidd, after long and noble years of anti-apartheid activism on the sports front, finally visits South Africa, registers eloquently what has already been accomplished –

and finds that the struggle to realize egalitarian sporting practices must continue; Jim Cason and Bill Martin survey expertly the present landscape of solidarity work in the U.S. and come up with a list of heavy-duty challenges of their own; and Judy Head looks at the vexing issue of AIDS in South Africa and some of the ways in which the democratic movement is seeking to confront that scourge. Sobering reading for a May Day celebration, no doubt. But, hey, what better occasion to think about fighting back?

Suzy Bernstein – Afrapix/Impact Visuals

“Mutually searching”

Trade Union Strategies, South Africa and Canada

As Canadian trade unionist Sam Gindin discovered on a recent visit there, South Africa felt a little too much like home. Canadian unions are under great pressure to conform to the dictates of the global marketplace and to accept the overbearing “logic of competitiveness.” He found his South African counterparts to be under much the same pressure. And he was sobered to discover just how difficult it is for them to resist such pressure and mount an effective counter-strategy for recasting South Africa’s post-apartheid economy. This aspect of the situation, too, was uncomfortably familiar to Gindin:

What I sensed was the same thing that happens here. People who aren’t comfortable with this are still going along with it because, like workers in Canada, they are intimidated: this is what is happening around the world, they’re told, and, of course, it is true that mere protectionism isn’t the answer. But the idea of seeing things in the context of a different development model – no-one has the confidence to talk about that.

Here in Canada, Gindin – former Research Director of the CAW and now Assistant to the President of that union – has himself argued vigorously against merely swallowing whole the assumption that “the globalization of the economy” is an “unchallengeable reality.” Canadian workers, he writes, need to reject an approach that dictates passive acceptance of a “lean and mean” regimen in the workplace; that prioritizes “competitiveness,” high value-added exports and high-tech production models at the expense of “social values” and local solutions;

and that downgrades the potential role of the state in stimulating and shaping economic development. (See, for example, his article “Putting the Con back in the Economy”, *This Magazine*, May, 1992 or his widely-circulated paper, co-authored with David Robertson, “Democracy and Productive Capacity: Notes Towards an Alternative to Competitiveness.”)

Interviewed on his return from South Africa by *Southern Africa Report*, Gindin reiterated such points, acknowledging just how difficult it is, given Canada’s present political and ideological climate, to resist free-market orthodoxy. Not that there isn’t also a continuing struggle over such issues here, of course. But Gindin had expected he would find even sharper resistance to the cock-eyed “rationality” of global restructuring in South Africa. For, as Gindin knew, the South African trade unions have been a major force within the broad popular movement that has finally put “negotiations” over a democratic transition on the agenda in South Africa. And there is also (in his words) “a much more overt identification with something that is anti-capitalist there: the socialist aspect of their whole history is obvious just in talking to workers, and at that level they’re quite articulate in a class way, in a way that is less common among workers here.”

However, Gindin quickly learned that this history and these broad sentiments do not immediately translate themselves into relevant and progressive economic policies. Invented by the Economic Trends Research Group – a team of economists and researchers closely linked to

COSATU (the Congress of South African Trade Unions) – to attend a workshop they were holding in Cape Town on industrial strategies for a new South Africa, Gindin found himself “thrown into an environment where a dominant perspective is how to be competitive. I became particularly worried when I heard people there saying that the fight against apartheid and for democracy has reached a stage where we now have to think about the problem of capitalism and then concluding – this was true amongst labour-linked intellectuals but also amongst other South Africans, vulnerable to these ideas when they are presented to them as being ‘modern’ and ‘realistic’ – that we have no choice but to integrate ourselves into the capitalist world in a particular way. So they begin to talk the language of modernization and the language, again, of competitiveness. I guess I was struck by a lot of the illusions that are floating around – struck, and surprised.”

Gindin did not make his first trip to South Africa without considerable background, of course. Active for many years with the old SACTU Solidarity Committee here in Canada, he has continued to have close contacts with South African trade unionists and he also read widely on developments in that country before setting out for the Cape Town workshop. That is why, when pressed on the point, Gindin elaborated that he experienced less surprise at the turn economic debates have taken amongst trade unionists in South Africa than “a certain sadness. I was seeing these incredibly heroic people, who had done so much, against

such incredible odds, and who are bright and thinking, but I was also seeing how tough it is now – I was seeing people who were in transition from one kind of fight to a different fight, and that the capacities and skills for this new fight were so different and the possibilities for new kinds of divisions so real ... Here is completely new terrain which I think is difficult for the unions.”

problems like we have in Canada, where you're putting out fires and on the defensive – with the difference that in South Africa the unions actually don't have the institutional capacity (research and other full-time staff, for example) for such a fight.

Moreover, Gindin found the broader political context, within which South African workers must

one hand,” observes Gindin, “the issue of ‘democracy’ becomes everything (to get ‘stability’).” On the other, there is a rather uncritical acceptance by the ANC of the role of such agencies as the IMF and, indeed, of the whole global capitalist set-up. “But if you were to say that you must challenge conglomerates, really redistribute and introduce real popular mobilization ...



Eric Miller – Impact Visuals

Cape Town protest of conditions of farmworkers, April 1992

There are periods of time in which courage is almost enough and you saw that, in some sense, during the anti-apartheid struggle itself. But now the problem for the trade union movement is that it's moving from a stage in which the issues seemed clearer – as difficult as it was to fight for democracy there's a way in which the issue was clearer – and the terrain has shifted because you have to fight capitalism – you have to deal with things like plant closures and if you're not in an environment where you're not taking over things [as in some more straightforward post-revolutionary situation] but have to negotiate, you wind up with

now chart their course, to be difficult in other ways. Most notably, the ANC's minimalist agenda – which it now presents to its followers as the only “reasonable” approach – serves to demobilize people. For the ANC, Gindin found, “the issue of consolidating a democratic constitution is so paramount that there is little thinking about how much power you might need as a state to confront development questions.” Indeed, the ANC itself seems seduced by the “competitiveness” model and this helps smooth its acceptance of constitutional compromises that are likely to produce only a very weak state. “On the

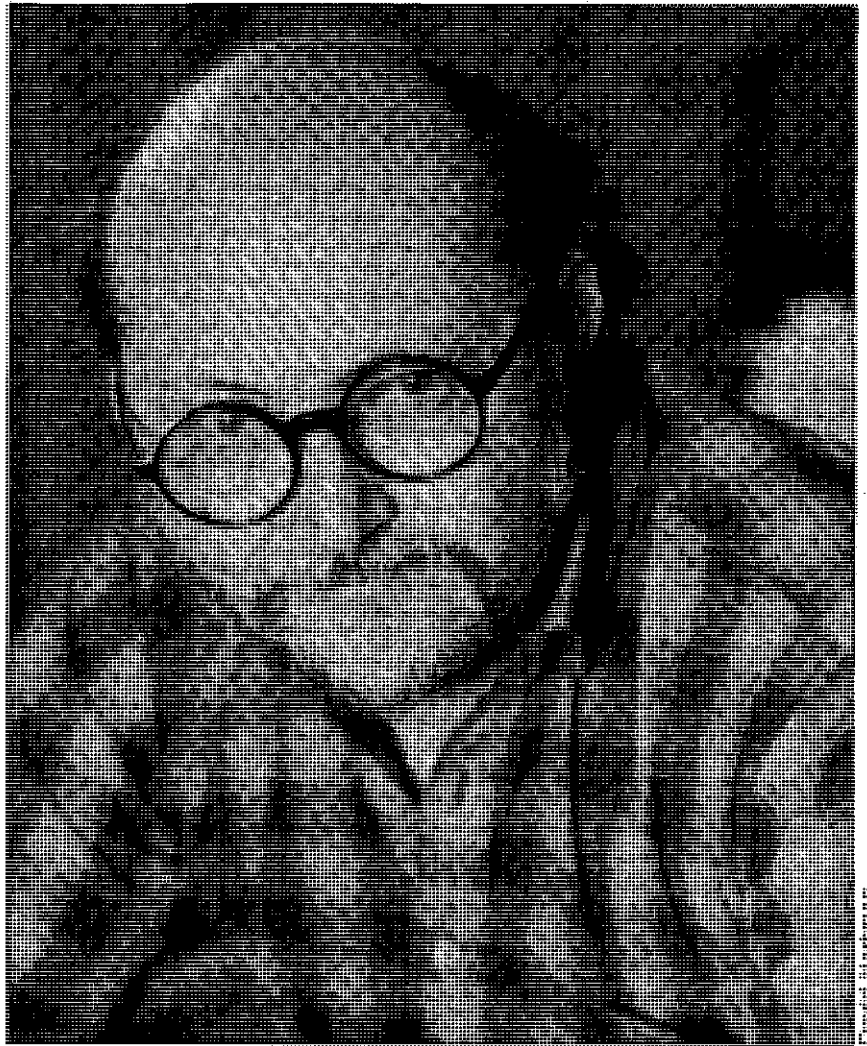
then you need a strong, effective state – I mean one that is strong and effective in progressive ways, of course – and, if that were your development model, seeking to realize it would slow down your wheeling and dealing over the constitution.” So instead, Gindin observes, the ANC comfortably blends a drive to consolidate formal democracy with “an extremely non-transformative model of development” and thus finds itself acting quite conservatively.

Even if this approach by the ANC leadership is adopted merely for tactical reasons – to safeguard the transition – it is legitimate

to wonder towards what end this transition might be leading. For, in Gindin's judgement, it threatens to produce "a situation where you have, on the one hand, high expectations and, on the other, a state without the capacity to even begin to meet those expectations. All you're going to do then is produce profound disillusionment, with the working class and others at the bottom of the social pyramid turning against their own ostensible representatives." Equally troubling for Gindin was the fact that some of the Economic Trends economists Gindin met with were prepared, for different reasons, to reinforce this same tendency: they have become so sceptical regarding ANC intentions as to downgrade the claims of state and party to a central role in the economic policy-making process and to advocate dealing directly, even exclusively, with capital in the struggle over the terms of the new South African economy.

But if an ineffective state seems to Gindin a recipe for disaster, he was even less convinced (as noted earlier) of the wisdom of the concrete economic agenda being advocated by some of the trade union-linked economists he encountered in the ET workshop. As the discussion turned more and more technical and as an emphasis upon the importance of high-tech exports and of plant-level "efficiency" occupied more and more of the discussion, Gindin became increasingly uneasy. Indeed, he found that the absurdities of the "competitiveness" model appeared, if anything, to be even more graphic in a South African context than in Canada:

You go to South Africa and you hear people saying we have to restructure and that's going to involve plant closures and all of a sudden it seems so absolutely absurd; you're sitting there in the context of fifty per cent of the population being unemployed, desperately trying to figure out how you actually provide



Sam Gindin

them with tools and equipment and you hear somebody saying that you have to close something, that something that can produce goods and is organized for production, should be allowed to close in the name of restructuring and becoming competitive - all of a sudden it's completely absurd - and in that sense it actually clarified and reinforced my own thoughts.

Just as distressing was the fact that the opportunities South Africa seemed to offer for politicizing economic questions in promising ways was in danger of being lost in such discussions. After all, the

biggest inefficiency in South Africa is unemployment and making some enterprises marginally more efficient is therefore not the major issue. Not enough surplus is likely be generated from such sectors, in any case, to transfer significant amounts to the townships or to potential workers seeking to be employed; moreover, the push of "competitiveness" may actually produce a reluctance to transfer to such sectors, since it will seem to dictate investment only in those sectors that are already strong. Isn't there also a danger that the unions themselves might come merely to defend their members -



Rats Mayet - Afrapix/Impact Visuals

Health workers march, Durban, April 1990

situated on the “inside” of this process – against the claims of the unemployed and the marginalized? Isn’t the real challenge, for all these reasons, to seek to link South Africa’s own internal “first world” and “third world” economies more productively rather than to place central emphasis on export to foreign markets?

Small wonder that Gindin asked aloud whether growth models and industrial strategies that were more internally focused, more self-expansive, wouldn’t offer far more promise. Pushing to gear “redundant” productive capacity to produce goods so desperately needed by the population; investing in housing, in educational and other infrastructural requirements and in electrification projects; doing so precisely to spread resources and develop markets throughout the country – and also to use existing skills and to develop people’s capacities to produce new goods across a broad front: here would be a way to politicize and popularize development, while also granting to the South African

economy some coherence in its own terms. Of course, Gindin is well aware that disciplining capital to accept such an agenda (and winning space from the IMF and its ilk to allow this kind of national focus for development to stand) is no easy task – whether in Canada or in South Africa. But he remains convinced that no other approach can actually hope to deliver development, and that to think otherwise is to chase a chimera.

Of course, Gindin was very far from wanting to sit in judgement on the choices his South African trade union counterparts feel compelled to make: he knows just how tough are the economic circumstances in which they find themselves. He also knows that, even if an alternative economic strategy along the lines he suggests might be conceivable, it will not be easy, in present day South Africa, to sustain the energy and creativity necessary to make it stick: “I was worried about them [in the unions] being worn down by a series of things. One is that whenever you’ve been through a difficult struggle

and you’ve actually achieved a lot and then you recognize the limits of what you’ve achieved – now it’s capitalism we have to fight, that in itself almost forces you to pause – it’s almost like you’re worn down and you need a rest.” And this in context where “the genius of white South Africa was, at a certain point, to recognize that what they ultimately want is capitalism, that apartheid we can let go and still have an apartheid that is not apartheid, one that still ensures that there are different classes and, in effect, different worlds. This was a system sophisticated enough to say at a certain point, okay, you win, that point I’m going to concede, now let’s have capitalism like everybody else. And for unionists who have been fighting all along, they suddenly see a different fight facing them ... and also a world Left that hasn’t been able to answer the question of how to handle this challenge [of globalization] ... and therefore it’s difficult to sustain a direction.”

But if the working-class in South Africa is momentarily “less coherent and confident than it was” it is a movement that nonetheless retains the capacity to keep searching for real solutions. “The history they’ve gone through and the history that is still lingering in this difficult period does reflect a certain kind of unionism, a particular model of trade unionism, one that is paralleled only perhaps by the Brazilians, and that still survives: a trade unionism that is really a social movement and that is really trying to come to grips with questions of strategy.” This not only promises that debate over the wisdom of accepting the grim logic of “competitiveness” is likely to continue within union circles. It also means, in terms of worker solidarity, that there remains standing in South Africa “a unionism that can inspire Canadians – we may say, well look, it’s different, but it’s actually inspiring to meet unionists who are thinking in terms of how

you build coalitions, how to build alliances, thinking strategically, and debating politics, and not just seeing a division of labour between politicians and unionists ...”

Gindin also offered some fresh thoughts on what Canadian trade unionists, on the basis of their own experience, might have to offer South African workers. As he moved beyond the ET seminar to meet with other South African trade unionists and community activists, Gindin sensed that the latter were not, in fact, completely sold on the capital restructuring/export-oriented tilt of much current discussion, nor on the unequivocal merits of the competitiveness model. Although they might not always feel confident enough to challenge such emphases in an open manner, Gindin found that often “people’s gut instincts are, wait a second, I’m bothered by this”: “So its very important for people in South Africa, workers, worker intellectuals, to hear some challenge to this [model] because if that’s all they hear, it starts to beat them down.”

I think the Canadian labour movement does have some things to be proud of. It’s one of the few labour movements in the world that hasn’t lost members, and it’s one of the few labour movements in which the absolute hegemony of this ideology – that says you have to be competitive and make this profound compromise with capital – hasn’t really overwhelmed it. So by passing on our experience of actually fighting the corporate agenda, it’s not that we’re bringing any particularly new insights but simply that we’re reinforcing the most positive tendencies in South Africa itself. South Africans have to hear from Canadians who say, “‘Team concept’, we went through that and it’s bull-shit” and the South African guy says, “Yeah, I always thought that” ... It’s actually important to hear this kind of thing, rather than hear there is really no alternative. Of course, it’s not even clear that this scepti-



CAW President, Buzz Hargrove, with South African unionists

cal trend is entirely dominant within our own union movement, but at least that’s what we have to offer.

Is this the core of new terms of solidarity that can be established between Canadian and South African workers? Too often, Gindin notes, “unions in the west that have resources see their role as helping other unions to become like themselves.” And, of course, Canadian unions do have skills to offer that might prove of use to South African trade unionists. (Gindin mentions, in this regard, the training in worker education some COSATU people have imbibed through participation in CAW programmes at its Port Elgin facility). But as regards policy questions (like industrial strategy), it is a more modest kind of “mutual searching” for answers that Gindin finds most promising: “Even if the usefulness of our exchanges is just to clarify the problem, so that people see that an export-oriented, global-integrated strategy doesn’t work, Canada’s in a position to discuss that. For example, we’re more integrated than anybody and we can talk about what integration and dependency mean in terms of closing

off future alternatives.”

Thus, faced with the hegemony of an increasingly globalized capital and the attendant pressures towards a certain kind of restructuring, the least workers can do across national frontiers is to pool experience and help each other to rebut the arguments bearing down upon them. Beyond this, and even more practically, labour may be able to find ways, both more and less modest, to limit capital’s mobility and undercut its ability to play one national labour force off against another. How far this will prove possible remains to be seen. Yet Sam Gindin felt his hopes reinforced by the dialogue he was able to have with his South African trade union counterparts – however sobering some of his findings on the ground may have been. You get a renewed sense from such exchanges, he explained, “that the working class actually is something real, that it continues and has all these dimensions, that it has gone through these courageous struggles and this puts your own struggle in some kind of context and you do feel you’re part of something bigger ... There’s nothing more powerful than that!”

Defining a Role: Trade Unions in Namibia

BY GRETCHEN BAUER

Gretchen Bauer is a researcher attached to the Namibian Institute for Social and Economic Research of the University of Namibia.

Three years after political independence in Namibia, the major trade union federation, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), and its affiliated unions, find themselves facing many seemingly intractable challenges.

The structural limitations of Namibia's primary sector-led economy are particularly evident at the moment as drought and falling mineral prices lead to layoffs and rationalization, exacerbating an already critical unemployment situation.

Moreover, despite the peace and apparent racial harmony, the transition to independence has only just begun; the apartheid legacy lives on, especially in the workplace, and the young trade union movement is finding it difficult to make the transformation from a pre-independence to a post-independence role.

The trade unions themselves are lacking in human resources and in organizational and financial capacity. This has led to a considerable imbalance in the recently proclaimed tripartite relationship among workers, employers and government.

To cap all of this, while the post-independence political and legal framework is likely to be supportive of trade union activities and the newly passed labour legislation is a vast improvement over the old, there is a risk that the new Labour Act may prove too complicated and cumbersome to be effectively used by the trade unions and others.

These and other factors have created a situation in which labour relations may, at best, be described as tense. The SWAPO party hierarchy has begun private discussions with business leaders and trade unionists and the Prime Minister has convened a two-day consultative meeting to address issues of labour relations in newly independent Namibia.

The economy

At the NUNW's October 1992 Economics Conference, President Sam Nujoma acknowledged that Namibia has attained political but not economic independence. However, it is improbable that Namibia will ever achieve independence from the world economy and from the recurring cycles of drought that afflict the economy at present.

Heavily dependent upon the primary and tertiary sectors of the economy, Namibia has an underdeveloped manufacturing sector that employs only five percent of the workforce and accounts for only four percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

The primary sector is dominated by minerals, fish and fish products, and beef for export, but includes a large subsistence agriculture sector where about half of the economically active population is estimated to be employed or underemployed. (In 1990, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated the total labour force in Namibia to be about 500,000 people).

The tertiary sector is dominated by the public service, the largest single employer, accounting for approximately 62,000 of the 185,000 formal sector workers in the country. While typical of African economies, the large civil service in Namibia is,

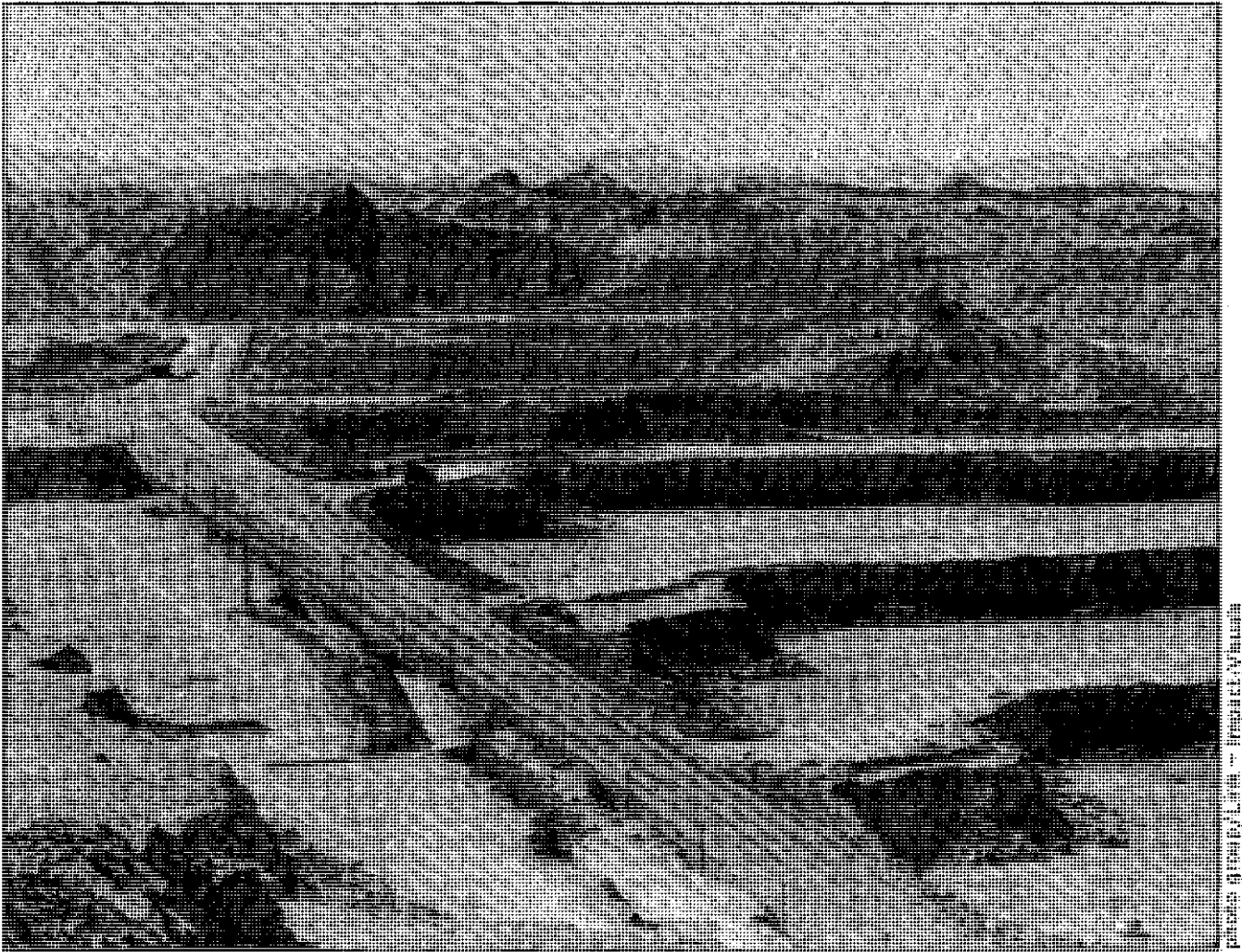
in part, a relic of the eleven previously existing 'ethnic authorities'. A clause in the constitution – part of the early compromise – is also responsible for ensuring that civil servants from the previous administration would retain their jobs.

Thus, the Namibian workforce is very sensitive to the impact created when the demand for certain minerals falls. This occurs when the market is flooded with former East Bloc uranium or 'illegal' Angolan diamonds, as is currently the case. Rössing Uranium, now producing at half of its capacity, laid off about 750 workers in late 1991 and Consolidated Diamond Mines is in the process of reducing its labour force by just over 1,000 workers.

A severe regional drought is having a similar impact; the drought has caused beef prices to fall and, as cattle are not large enough, Namibia has not been able to meet its existing Lome quota. The net result has been the redundancy of thousands of already barely surviving farmworkers who are scattered among the huge, predominantly white-owned, cattle and goat farms. Workers at some of the meat-processing plants have also been affected.

Meanwhile, concern about the bloated civil service has led to plans for rationalization, including reducing the number of jobs by about 5,000.

Since independence, the government has declared a 'mixed economy' in Namibia. In other words, this means a heavily private sector-dominated economy, with the exception of several parastatals and the Development Brigades where EXPLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia, SWAPO's former military



Rössing, the world's biggest open cast uranium mine

wing) combatants are being retained and employed.

In addition, some attention is being diverted to building up 'small entrepreneurs' and to halting rural to urban migration. There are ongoing attempts to attract new foreign investment. Many potential investors attended the Private Sector Investment Conference in February 1991 and many others have registered for the March 1993 Mining Investment Conference. However, these efforts have not achieved the desired inflow of foreign capital.

So for the trade unions, an acute economic situation exacerbates al-

ready difficult conditions for organization: a small formal sector workforce, dispersed workplaces and long distances, lack of transport and, in some cases, unreliable communications, large numbers of rural migrants who continue to live in hostels and work on a contract basis, etc. The trade unions are losing members as more and more jobs are lost, and they are increasingly demoralized by their inability to stem the tide of retrenchments. Their position is further weakened by a situation in which already, according to the ILO, about two thirds of the subsistence sector in Namibia is unemployed.

The transition and the apartheid legacy

Like many community-based and other organizations in Namibia, the NUNW and affiliated unions find themselves in a state of transition since independence. The NUNW unions were largely born of the political struggle for independence. NUNW has its origins in the early 1970s when, following the 1969/70 Tanga conference, exiled SWAPO leaders in Tanzania established a Secretary for Labour. Later, in the late 1970s, John Ya Otto, as SWAPO Secretary for Labour, worked to mobilize international

support for the liberation struggle among national and international trade union organizations. From 1983 the Nduuvu Nangola Trade Union Centre in Kwanza Sul offered basic courses in trade unionism and trained future labour administrators. A newspaper, the *Namibian Worker*, was published on an occasional basis.

Inside Namibia (except for a brief attempt at organizing workers in the late 1970s, which was not motivated by strong links to NUNW outside the country) there was no formal NUNW presence until the mid-1980s. Following a period of particularly harsh repression in the country and therefore of particular quiet, the NUNW trade unions emerged in the mid-1980s to lend a militant voice to the final years of the independence struggle.

The mobilizational role played by trade unionism in the late 1980s, however, is not the appropriate one for the early 1990s. The trade unions themselves admit the changes they are experiencing, with some trade union leaders regretting the lack of adequate preparation for the post-independence period.

Primarily the transition involves re-orienting union efforts away from the political struggle towards economic and social objectives. To make matters worse, the transition is expected to take place in an atmosphere in which a policy of national reconciliation prevails and the apartheid legacy is strong.

The policy of national reconciliation is important because, while it has succeeded in keeping the peace, it is largely perceived as having preserved the privileges of the few. By contrast, an increasingly restive population feels it has yet to reap the fruits of independence. Compromises effected during the process of drafting the Constitution which, for example, protect private property, preclude certain government policy options.

Another legacy of the past that

remains largely untouched by independence is that employers remain white and, in some cases, foreign, retain possession of resources, and are rarely supporters of SWAPO. By contrast, workers are black, Namibian, mostly unskilled and underpaid, and are largely loyal SWAPO supporters. Thus the inherent antagonism between capital and labour has been enhanced and there is little, if any, basis for the mutual trust and understanding the government would like to promote in the interest of Namibia's fragile, developing national economy.

In addition to adjusting to a situation in which government is no longer an antagonist, the trade unions are being called upon to interact in harmony with employers, for the sake of the national interest.

The transition also involves sorting out the trade unions' relationship to SWAPO, to which NUNW is formally affiliated. Some union members have voiced dissatisfaction about the decision to formally affiliate with SWAPO, taken at the extraordinary congress of the NUNW in April 1991. Arguments against the move include the increasingly nationalist position articulated by SWAPO, one that appeals to the wider national interests and not just the interests of the workers, and the notion that affiliation might undermine union attempts to criticize government or to determine their own socioeconomic priorities.

It is also felt that affiliation may prevent some non-SWAPO members from joining the NUNW unions and certainly that affiliation precludes any attempts at unity with the other main trade union federation (the Namibian People's Social Trade Unions), which many feel would strengthen the position of workers in Namibia.

Finally, some workers will continue to view the unions in political terms, thereby impeding the transition to stronger and more effective trade unions. At the same time, others insist that, given SWAPO's

early origins among contract migrant workers and the unions' own more recent origins among SWAPO activists and supporters in the mid-1980s, the two cannot be separated. In any case, the decision to affiliate was voted on by workers at the April 1991 congress and there is certainly no other political party to which the unions would lend their support. Perhaps more importantly, the unions must decide just what it means to be affiliated to SWAPO - or not.

The lack of capacity

As indicated, the trade union movement in Namibia is a relatively young one. This is surely one factor accounting for the lack of adequate capacity within the NUNW unions. The member unions have only been formed in the last several years: the Namibia Food and Allied Union (NAFAU) and the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN) in late 1986, the Metal and Allied Namibian Workers Union (MANWU) and the Namibian Public Workers Union in 1987, the Namibia Transport and Allied Union (NATAU) in 1988, the Namibia National Teachers Union (NATU) in 1989 and the Namibia Domestic Workers Union (NDAWU) in 1990.

In addition, efforts are currently underway to organize the commercial farmworkers who until recently numbered about 35,000. The NUNW claims about 65,000 members among its seven federated unions though it cannot give precise overall membership figures or indicate how many of those are paid up members. Recruitment of new members when national independence is no longer the most urgent priority is another issue facing the trade unions in the transition.

The inadequate human resources and organizational capacity is, in a sense, another legacy of apartheid. On the whole, the members of the workforce have little formal training, are often illiterate (the national rate

of illiteracy is about 60 percent) and are not at all proficient in English, the official national language since independence and the language in which public policy is made and business increasingly is conducted. Even trade union leaders complain of inadequate English skills.

As well, the research capacity of the unions is almost non-existent, another factor that limits their ability to influence government policy, to elaborate their own policy vision, and even to prepare themselves thoroughly for negotiations with employers. The unions, like many other organizations in Namibia, are plagued by a steady drain of officials to more secure and lucrative positions within government. Many of the more experienced trade unionists, those who essentially brought the movement into being, are now sitting in various government ministries and other offices.

Another problem is a heavy reliance on donor funding. On the one hand, this funding has facilitated the building of new headquarters in Kantua and regional offices in Keetmanshoop, Swakopmund and Tsumeb. On the other hand, the perils of donor funding are well known; among other things, the unions have not been forced to rely upon member subscriptions or other mechanisms for raising funds.

The new labour act

Of course, the legal and political setting in which the unions now find themselves is the best they have ever faced. Fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed by the Constitution and these have been carefully monitored since independence. As well the NUNW's party, SWAPO, is currently the ruling political party. Finally, after more than two years of effort, the Labour Act was promulgated in April 1992 and came into force on 1 November 1992.

In many respects, this Act, which repeals 31 previously existing laws and amends 11 others, repre-

sents a dramatic gain for the workers of Namibia. For the first time all workers, including domestic workers, farm workers and the public service, are covered by labour legislation. In essence, the new Act provides a framework for regulating labour relations which encourages collective bargaining between employers and trade unions. Among other things, it provides for the right to strike in certain circumstances, for access to employer premises for the purpose of trade union organization and for means by which to redress what are commonly considered to be unfair labour practices. There are straightforward requirements for registering trade unions and no restrictions, as in the past, on association with a political party. The legislation also makes some improvements in the basic conditions of employment. In addition, the Act provides for new structures, including a Labour Advisory Council, a Labour Commissioner, Wages Commissions, and Labour Courts and district labour courts, some of which are not yet fully operational.

Unfortunately, the government has already applied to the Ministry of Labour for a six month exemption from implementing certain provisions of the new legislation. Indeed, there is little doubt that many employers, especially the smaller ones, are not following all of the stipulations of the Act. With the widespread perception that the new legislation is too sophisticated and too costly for Namibia's economy, vigilance on the part of the trade unions and a proactive Labour Commissioner and Ministry of Labour will be required. To that end, the Ministry of labour, and other organizations have held numerous seminars and workshops during which they have attempted to inform themselves of the Act's contents. This is unlikely to be enough.

As noted previously, labour relations in Namibia have become a concern to both SWAPO and the gov-

ernment. At the Prime Minister's recent consultative meeting, trade unionists were called together with employers' representatives and some few members of the government, in particular the Ministry of Labour and Manpower Development. At the meeting, the government's overriding concern to maintain peace and stability in Namibia, to preserve Namibia's reputation as the model of democracy in Africa, and to attract foreign investment, was evident.

To that end, the government appealed to both trade unions and employers to work together in the perceived national interest. Trade unions were urged to ease up on their slogans and rhetoric and the government warned local employers, in no uncertain terms, that their negative attitudes were undermining attempts to attract foreign investment to the country. In a significant departure from previous statements, the government has criticized the private sector for the recent spate of retrenchments and the failure to generate new jobs, and the government even hinted that the 'mixed' economy proclaimed in the Constitution may, in the future, experience more government intervention than it has so far.

At the consultative meeting, labour and capital were urged to work together, taking cognizance of the dire economic situation in which Namibia presently finds itself.

If labour in Namibia is to hold its own in the new dispensation, the trade union movement must be strengthened. A greater worker consciousness must be fostered and trade union structures, from the shop floor up to the national centre, must be fortified. The trade unions must be able to give greater and more articulate voice to the many outstanding demands of the workers of Namibia. Otherwise, Namibia's hard won independence will continue to have little discernible effect on the ordinary worker in the mines, on the farms, and in the factories.

Starting Over:

Rebuilding the Workers' Movement in Mozambique

BY ADRIANE PAAVO

Adriane Paavo worked in Mozambique from 1990-92 as a CUSO co-operant, working to build and strengthen ties between Canadian and Mozambican NGOs. She represented the Grain Services Union (CLC) in its occupational health and safety project with the Mozambican food and beverage industry workers' union (SINTIAB). She is now Canadian co-ordinator for the project. For more information about the GSU-SINTIAB OHS project, write to 2334 McIntyre Street, Regina, Sask., S4P 2S2.

Peace has come to Mozambique, and it appears to be a peace that is holding. This is a matter for rejoicing. Reconstruction is the current theme, refugees are coming home, and people and goods are moving freely throughout the country.

Mozambicans aren't the only ones finding their country a much more hospitable place to live and move around in. More and more South African licence plates are showing up in the capital, Maputo, and throughout the country, a visible sign of the interest South African and other investors have in Mozambique's "opportunities."

Peace was a necessary condition for profit-making in Mozambique and came about in no small part because supporters of both sides knew their math. It had become more expensive (whether through outright destruction of plant and product or through lost opportunities) to let the war go on than to bring it to a halt and create the conditions for more convenient economic exploitation.

Mozambique is no longer just for local entrepreneurs or the daring. Mozambique is open for business.

The investors are there, looking for bargains, and the state is a willing participant in the sell-off.

"We have a very hard-working people in Mozambique," says President Joaquim Chissano in a slick Anglo-American Corporation video promoting investment in Mozambique. "There is country still to be exploited and explored. It's a virgin country, if I may say. A foreign businessman who comes to Mozambique should be interested in actually bringing in something but sure that he is able to take something back home."

Investors are told it is an advantage that Mozambique has gone through a socialist phase and has rejected it. "Gone are the days of unworkable theories," intones the video. "Mozambique has been down a road that many countries [i.e. an ANC-led South Africa] still attempt to travel by rhetoric or endeavour. It has no intention of turning down that cul-de-sac again. For businessmen this must count as a very real asset for the future as it offers long-term security with a government that appreciates how vital a healthy private sector is."

Mozambique's natural wealth is what draws the eye of investors. But another attraction - from the point of view of government and investors like Anglo-American - is the "willing and able labour force, desperate for work." Mozambique's people are being offered up as one of the sacrifices to economic development which will benefit the few and not the many.

There is very little keeping workers from the pyre. Less than five percent of the population is employed in the paid labour force*, leaving a large segment

of people who are literally both hungry and cash-starved. There are hundreds of thousands of young people, urban unemployed, and rural-refugees-turned-urbanites who would be happy to take over someone else's low-paying job for even less.

Many Canadians increasingly turn to unions and other social movements as a means to protect and improve working and living conditions. Mozambique has a union movement, which this year celebrates its tenth anniversary. How much can it offer workers and the population at large in the way of leadership for progressive social change?

A short trade union tradition

Mozambique has a very short history of trade unionism, and virtually no experience with militant, democratic trade unionism.

Unions did exist in the country before independence from Portugal in 1975, but workers had to earn above a certain wage in order to qualify as members. This effectively barred the majority of black workers from membership in what were fascist, corporatist unions.

With independence in 1975, racial oppression in the workplace disappeared, but low wages and unhealthy working conditions remained. The reason given - that the new country's economy was weak - had basis in fact, but was also

*an estimate based on the Mozambican Workers Organization (OTM) figures of 500,000 members, plus teachers, journalists, domestic workers, and other workers not covered by these categories

an easy way to control workers' demands by means of patriotism.

The new government, following a Soviet model of development, oversaw the creation of workers' production councils in factories and workplaces. In many cases these councils gave shop-floor workers real control over production, especially where Portuguese owners and technicians had fled. In 1983 the state created the Organization of Mozambican Workers (OTM) and these councils passed to its control.

Thanks to its ideological bent at the time and the fragile condition of the economy, the Mozambican state had a vested interest in maintaining strong control over the labour force. Unions were expected to enforce state and party policy among the working class and to ensure that production continued and increased. Workers, management, and the state were all elements of the worker-peasant alliance and therefore did not have conflicting interests, according to the theory in currency at the time.

Starting in 1985, the OTM began to create national unions, assigning each to represent a different sector of the economy. In effect, rather than represent workers, the unions functioned more as departments of the OTM, implementing OTM and party policy. To date there are 15 national unions, with state administration workers, health workers, and teaching support staff being represented directly by the union central. Union membership is voluntary and open to anyone earning a salary or wage.

There is also a journalists' union (the ONJ) and a teachers' union (the ONP) which were created independent of the OTM and continue to function as such.

The effects of the break-up of the communist system in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s was deeply felt in Mozambique. The loss of external support and the continuing war with Renamo contributed to the

adoption of a new constitution in late 1990. This created a multiparty political system, put emphasis on the rule of law, and opened the way to a free-market economy.

In keeping with this new environment of Western-style democracy, the ruling party instructed the mass movements it had created to become independent. At the OTM national conference in November 1990 new statutes were passed making it, on paper at least, independent of any political party. But in fact much else, including top leadership, stayed the same. Many workers and union staff who had been hoping for greater change felt frustrated

but saw no vehicle through which to express their concerns or push for change.

An opening for a new trade unionism

As a further democratic reform, the government passed a new trade union freedom act at the end of 1991. For the first time, the act recognized the existence of union committees in the workplaces and of unions, who were given, among other rights, the right to form union centrals.

This law was what many in the union movement had been waiting for. It gave unions the legal means,



Mozambican textile factory

Antonio Muchave

and in fact the legal responsibility, to exist as independent associations. Instead of the OTM union central having the right to create and disband unions as it had before the new law, workers now have the right to create unions and unions have the right to create or disband centrals.

Conservatives within the OTM realized too late the impact the new law would have on their hegemony over the unions and the movement's agenda. According to the leadership of the independent trade unions, responding to the pressure to adopt certain progressive measures was one way for the government to shore up its own hold on power. The government was less conservative than the OTM leadership and refused to change or repeal the law.

To date, many Mozambican unions have registered or are in the process of officially registering with the Ministry of Labour. Three unions - civil construction and mining (SINTICIM), hotel and tourism (SINTIHOTS), and road transport (SINTRAT) - went one step further. They announced their break with the policies and structure of the OTM, a move which has caused considerable consternation among the leadership of the union central. Not only is this break significant in itself, but the economic sectors they represent will likely be important in a future, peaceful Mozambique. Other unions, like the metal and energy workers (SINTIME), have maintained their affiliation to the OTM while staking out an independent, critical, and self-critical position.

Conversations with the leadership of some of the independent unions indicate frustration with the heavy bureaucracy of the OTM, its lack of internal democracy and financial accountability, and its hesitation to take action to defend workers who continue to suffer from the state-implemented structural adjustment programs and from the rapid advances to a wide-open free-market economy.

At times, the differences seem more a matter of style than substance. While the independents did break with the OTM, not only do they retain close ties with the OTM but they have also not launched any blistering attacks on the OTM or their own campaigns. Although at times the OTM leadership treats the independents like *persona non grata* there are discussions underway to see how the OTM and the independents could get back together again. The lack of political policy debate may be due to the multitude of legitimate concerns over accounting shenanigans and the lack of internal democracy and autonomy for national unions. It likely has a lot to do with union leaders being more comfortable with the role of administrators of party directives rather than of leaders of political change campaigns.

The events of 1992 seem more cautious and legalistic than revolutionary. However, some union leaders say that if they had left the OTM before the new law was passed, they would have been jailed. They were waiting for a clear signal from the Frelimo government in the form of the trade union freedom act. Certainly the boundaries of democracy and dissent are changing and Mozambicans are in the process of finding out how far the lines have moved.

For the trade union movement, the question has long been and still remains: within whatever boundaries exist, can it take on a relevant, active role that will give workers some measure of protection and support and not let trade unionism become yet another of those "unworkable theories."

Punching the time clock

Mozambique never was a worker's paradise, even before it became fashionable to talk about market forces, margins, and growth opportunities. Wages were low and working conditions at best poor and at worst life-

threatening. Sacrifice - in the name of national economic development or because of the war - was always the reason for stifling demands. The union acted as an arm of management to enforce discipline, and organize "volunteer" work brigades.[†]

Smoldering discontent sparked into widespread protest in the wild-cat strike wave of January and February 1990, the third year of Mozambique's structural adjustment program. The government was shaken into recognizing strikes as a legitimate means of job action - previously an unthinkable option - and into acknowledging workers' concerns with living conditions, if not into actually making any improvements.

Strike action has continued sporadically since then. The issues have been nonpayment of back wages; classification of workers into a multi-step system that provides the chance of pay increases through promotion and skills upgrading; better subsidies for housing, transportation, and income tax - anything that in any way could deal with the real problem: low wages.

These strikes have usually been organized by what are known as "ad hoc committees," that is, by groups of workers and not through the union structures that exist in each workplace. The ad hoc committees have not had much staying power, though, beyond a few days of rage. Nor have the committees taken

[†]A top OTM leader was asked if Mozambican workers would follow the example of their Nicaraguan sisters and brothers and argue that the thousands of hours of volunteer labour is an investment and therefore gives them a claim on any state enterprises about to be privatized. He replied that the Nicaraguan example did not apply to Mozambique. "Mozambican workers worked many voluntary hours because the country was in difficulty, not in order to make any claims against property."

over discredited union structures or joined forces with other committees in other workplaces.

Fear seems to be one disincarnate. Some strikers who have seen their efforts fail due to the treachery of their fellows are not eager to repeat the experience and prefer to suffer in silence. Inexperience is another reason. It's easy enough to express outrage at injustice, but channeling, organizing, and sustaining that energy require skills that most Mozambican workers haven't yet developed. Survival is yet another reason. Most workers are just too hungry, too tired, and too reluctant to risk the mite they have to put their necks on the block.

As privatization gallops forward, job actions have taken on a new twist. Within the last year, workers at several soon-to-be privatized state enterprises have walked off the job, calling for government enquiries into mismanagement and embezzlement. Management has been busily pillaging state companies in the hopes of ensuring their own personal financial futures before the assets go on the auction block, and, more generally, before a possible change of government puts an end to their days of power and influence. The workers - well, they just want to make sure that they will still have jobs, whether private or public sector.

Time for a change

At present, key elements are in place for mobilizing workers: a sharp sense of grievance, an understanding of the causes of the problem, and an awareness of the growing difference between workers' interests and management's interests. The "political space" exists for unions to organize, mobilize, and defend workers' interests. The new constitution and subsequent legislation have opened the doors to the creation of nongovernmental organizations and interest groups, and Mozambicans have responded by creating, in a very short time, a varied and growing selection of organizations to represent,

defend, and extend their interests.

Limiting factors exist for both the OTM and the independents. One is the unions' and the union movement's will and ability to implement the changes in political and administrative style, the need for which they all at least pay lip service to. Will union leaders see representing the economic and social needs of the illiterate cleaning woman earning minimum wage as being more fundamental than hobnobbing with politicians in Armani suits? Will unions fight every dismissal instead of co-signing the severance papers? Will union power be measured in the cohesion and resolve of the base instead of in the political standing of its leader?

Canadian unions can help, and have been helping. It's a difficult balancing act: on the one hand the need to not interfere in the development of another country's fragile union movement, and, on the other, the need to act in a timely manner given the onslaught of the entrepreneurial hordes. But some unions, like the Western Canada-based Grain Services Union, have built up a long experience of work with Mozambican sister unions and are attempting, on the basis of negotiated accords, to support training and mobilizing of shop-floor workers.

Regional ties are crucial too, as more South African and other foreign firms move in. Mozambican workers need to know the labour practices of these new employers, and need to know the strategies other unions have used to protect and win gains for their members. South Africa's Food and Allied Workers Union is spearheading an effort to form a regional coordinating body of southern African food industry unions, of which Mozambique is seen as a key member. A southern African free trade zone could be in the cards, and the Mozambican government wants to be cut in. "We have to

prepare as a region to co-operate with other regions, Europe as a region, Japan and East Asia as a region, the United States, Canada, and I don't know [Latin America] as a region," Co-operation Minister Jacinto Veloso states in Anglo-American's promotional video.

Another limiting factor will be the peace Mozambicans have made (with a little help from their friends). Will it last past the announcement of election results or will neither side be prepared to lose? Or will, as some fear, Frelimo and Renamo elites recognize that they share more in common with one another than they do with the majority of Mozambicans, and clamp down on the new openness which has allowed so many segments of the population to begin to speak with an organized public voice, to begin to demand? This kind of deal-cutting is, again, something that a strong, representative, and rooted trade union movement could do much to prevent.

What unions in Mozambique really need is the time to mature and learn. But time is one commodity Mozambique does not have in abundance. Investors are rushing in, newcomers who will be only too happy to try and shape the unions they find in their workplaces, to buy them off or co-opt them. For union leaders used to the days of an old-boys'-club style of dealing with problems, used to putting the interests of the nation's economy and the company's ledger before the interests of the workers, it's going to be hard to break out of a mold which might mean putting their own jobs on the line.

The OTM hopes to hold a national congress this year to repair its damaged legitimacy and to restore unity within the movement. Workers must hope that the Mozambican union movement seizes this opportunity to develop a viable action program and to prepare itself to deal with the future, now lying like a ticking time bomb at its feet.

Bearing the Brunt:

Labour and Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe

BY LLOYD SACHIKONYE

Lloyd Sachikonye is a researcher at the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies with a particular interest in labour matters.

Zimbabwe's economic structural adjustment programme, ESAP, is only half-way through its five year lifespan. But it has already become clear that its impact on the economy, particularly on employment and labour relations, has been far from positive.

In common with the structural adjustment programmes in other African countries, the main objectives of Zimbabwe's ESAP ostensibly were to stimulate economic growth, attract foreign investment, expand employment, and reduce government expenditure through economic liberalization measures.

The measures introduced to reach these principal objectives have been the basis of the orthodox package touted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The package typically prescribes trade liberalization, devaluation, privatization, huge cuts in government spending and social services like education and health and the deregulation of working conditions.

Zimbabwe's ESAP was intended to increase the annual economic growth from an average of four per cent in the five year period before the ESAP to five per cent by 1995. Furthermore, the Zimbabwe Government hoped that massive inflows of foreign investment would strengthen the performance of the manufacturing and export sectors while creating job opportunities. These new job opportunities would defuse a potentially explosive political time bomb for the government of President Robert Mugabe

which faces an unemployment rate of about 30 per cent.

Two and a half years after the ESAP was launched, the economy has contracted substantially. The growth rate has nose-dived to below zero in 1992. Although the drought of 1991-92 contributed in part to the decline in growth, it is not the sole cause of the precipitous drop and of the substantial lay-offs that have occurred in both the public and private sectors.

Monetary and trade liberalization policies are the ESAP measures that have had an immediate and direct impact on employment and labour relations. Interest rates trebled in early 1992 to reach between 35 and 40 per cent. Coupled with more than a 40 per cent devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar, firms have been driven to the wall under the new de-regulated monetary regime.

Not only have many new projects been shelved as a consequence of escalating costs; capital expenditure programmes that were already underway have been suspended. Even some 'blue chip' firms are reeling from a liquidity crisis. Medium- and small-scale industries have been particularly hard hit with some going into liquidation.

Thus, what was intended as a curb on inflation and money supply has now become a fetter on investment and growth in the productive sector. Trade liberalization has also begun to exert an adverse impact on some industries - for instance, textile and clothing, motor vehicle and paper industries. An executive of a leading textile manufacturer, David Whitehead, has advised that if imported clothes continue to be allowed into the country,

"we might end up with no textile industry in Zimbabwe."

Similarly, the Paper Manufacturer's Association has recently warned that the industry could be wiped out if the cheaper imports continue to be dumped on the Zimbabwe market. The spectre of de-industrialization has caused a great deal of anxiety within the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries which represents organized business interests. While these interests may have benefited from a protected domestic market in the past, the lack of careful sequencing and coordination of the ESAP may well undermine an industrial base painstakingly constructed over the past fifty years.

What has been, therefore, the direct impact of the ESAP on employment, labour relations and workers' living standards? Certainly, under the ESAP it was envisaged that about 28,000 public service and parastatal workers and another 20,000 private sector workers would lose their jobs by 1995.

The ostensible purpose of this retrenchment was to reduce government spending in the public sector and to increase productivity, via restructuring, in the private sector. However, it is now quite likely that more private sector workers will lose their jobs if the pattern of layoffs continues. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has estimated that by the end of 1992, some 15,000 private sector workers had already been laid off. Since then several thousand more jobs have been lost in the mining sector. In the public sector, 6,000 workers had been laid off and 7,000 abolished by July 1992.

Moreover, the numbers of fired workers has been much higher

than the official numbers reported because these figures do not include casual or contract workers who in some industries constitute as much as twenty-five per cent of the permanent work force.

Lay-offs have not only swelled the numbers of the unemployed; they have also had a devastating social impact. In most instances, the severance packages have been inadequate to the needs of the newly unemployed. One agro-industrial estate that laid off more than 3,000 workers because of ESAP and the drought recorded a fifty per cent drop in school enrollment among the children of the laid off workers and a rise in crime on the estate. In 1992, most company reports noted substantially reduced sales. One textile company reported a drop of fifty per cent in total production while the retail industry registered a decrease of thirty per cent in December 1992 over the year before.

Between May 1991 and June 1992, lower-income urban families experienced an average 43.6 per cent price increase. Food prices showed the steepest rise with an increase of 64.5 per cent. The price trends showed that this lower-income group was being more severely affected by consumer price inflation. Yet, most wage awards in 1992 were below 15 per cent, implying that the living standards of many workers were seriously affected.

In this context of lay-offs and unemployment, workers face a crisis of job insecurity and falling living standards. Under ESAP, employers' power to hire and fire, without recourse to safeguards, have been strengthened. Collective bargaining revolves more and more around job security, severance packages and benefits, and not exclusively on wage increases as tended to be the case in the past. The realism amongst workers as expressed through their unions is not reciprocated by employers. One company executive has frankly admitted that under the ESAP regime:

"...many managers confronted with financial crisis ... found that the only area where they could take action with [a] considerable degree of freedom was in the deduction of the head count through retrenchments. For a great number of companies, this option has proved not only to be the line of least resistance but also to be an area of where quick productivity gains can ostensibly be made.

"For an embattled management facing shareholders' discontent, retrenchment may be one of the ways to demonstrate to shareholders that management is determined to turn the situation around." [Mutizwa 1993]

The working class, therefore, bears the heavier brunt not only of ESAP but of the limitations of management in adjusting to the 'free market' economy. Notwithstanding the retrenchment regulations introduced in 1992 by government to control and monitor job losses, the present context has created an atmosphere in which lay-offs are portrayed as essential to economic restructuring. The workplace labour regime has also undergone a transformation: discipline is tighter and threats of dismissal abound.

What are the political implications of ESAP for relations between the state, capital and labour? Business is not united in its support for the government's structural adjustment programme. Those firms that have been critical of ESAP have shared common ground with unions in their calls for a drastic

modification or scrapping of the program. The survival strategies of these firms have incorporated mechanisms of consultation and negotiation with workers' representatives on a continuous basis.

In those instances where firms have taken advantage of ESAP to implement a harsher workplace regime, polarization has sharpened. The incidence of lock-outs and work stoppages has grown in 1993. As for relations between the Zimbabwe government and the labour movement, they have reached their lowest point since independence. Following the collapse of a social contract that had to a degree sustained social redistribution measures (education, health and land resettlement), the state is now viewed as pursuing a full-blown project of capitalist accumulation in concert with domestic and international capital. From the labour movement's perspective, this helps to explain why it was not consulted in the design of ESAP.

In the absence of a popular mandate to lend legitimacy to the ESAP, the labour movement believes the long-term effect on the Mugabe government will be negative. This is why it anticipates that the 1993 elections will be crucial and why there has been a debate within the movement as to whether to create a political wing to champion workers' interests in that electoral campaign. Workplace struggles are increasingly viewed as an inadequate response to political factors that increasingly impinge directly on labour relations.

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Worker to Worker: A Canadian Unionist in South Africa

BY GERRY LEBLANC

Gerry LeBlanc is a miner and vice-president of the United Steel Workers of America Local 9113 in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia. Last November he travelled to South Africa on behalf of the Steelworkers Humanity Fund.

As I got off the plane in Johannesburg to begin a Canadian Steelworkers Humanity Fund visit, I did so with very few pre-conceived notions of the workings of the South African labour movement. Although I had read everything I could possibly find on the subject, and met briefly with a representative of a major South African trade union before leaving Canada, I knew that my visit would be a true learning experience.

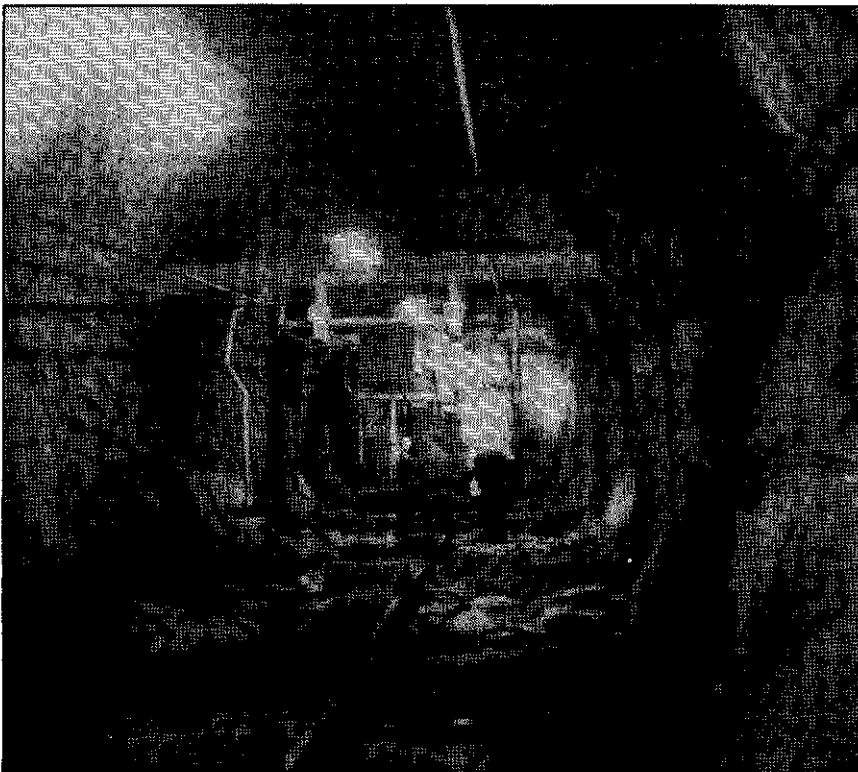
While unionism in the North, and especially in North America, is either in stagnation or decline, it is quite the opposite in South Africa. With most of the world's attention focused on groups such as the ANC, the labour movement generally goes unnoticed. While most Canadians could name at least a couple of top ANC personalities, most, including many in the labour movement, would be hard-pressed to name even one Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) official.

It was quite refreshing to see that within South Africa the labour movement is far from an anonymous entity. This is not surprising considering the impact that labour has had

on the liberation movement through its pressuring the government with general strikes. This use of the unions as vehicles for social change was the first impression I had of how this movement was unique.

It is nearly impossible as a unionist to visit a country and meet with unionists there and not want to make comparisons. It is however, difficult to make such comparisons when you consider that every accomplishment, defeat and the very existence of the labour movement itself in South Africa, took place under the weight of apartheid. I, like most Canadians, grew up hearing about South Africa, reading and watching news about it and knowing that apartheid was a horrific thing. Before I left Toronto a previous visitor to South Africa told me quite bluntly, "You will be shocked when you see apartheid face to face." I don't think any amount of preparation or warning can lessen the shock of encountering such a system.

The prophecy made by my acquaintance in Toronto became true while I was having a conversation with a National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) official. During our conversation, in which we were discussing Workers' Compensation, I asked what the process would be for compensating a disabled worker, to which he replied, "That depends on the colour of your skin." I suppose he detected the disbelief from the look on my face because he immediately started looking through his papers for the documents to prove his point. After a while he handed me a copy of the legislation that assigned compensation for disability and, in fact, did so by colour. Absolutely nothing, not the poverty in the townships nor the history of



Gerry LeBlanc

The Vaal Reefs underground gold mine near Klerkendorf

apartheid-initiated violence, verified apartheid for me as did those few pages I read. To see a law written to reflect differences based on one's skin colour was the shock I had been warned about.

Having seen the stark reality of apartheid, I appreciated what a formidable task it has been for the labour movement to achieve any type of justice for the workers. During my visit I talked with both union officials and rank and file members and was continually impressed with their tenacity and enthusiasm in the face of such obvious adversity.

One of the many problems facing labour in South Africa is, as in many countries, a dwindling job market due to closures and restructurings. What is unique is that South African unions are really responding to the crisis. The NUM, for example, has developed a Projects Department that works with laid-off workers to help them develop new job skills or to become self-sufficient by setting up co-operatives. When I visited the NUM offices I spoke with members of the Phalaborwa Co-op, a venture that produces T-shirts, hats and pins. At one time a T-shirt with a political message on it would likely land the wearer in jail but now, as one co-op member explained, with real political change happening, people are not afraid to wear them and the co-op can barely meet the demand.

I also visited a construction training co-op where former miners were learning new job skills. Most of the participants had only ever worked in mining and found they had no transferable skills to apply in the job market once their mining jobs were made redundant. This project, as well as teaching new skills, has been successful in placing some of the graduates in jobs. As I toured the project I tried to think of similar projects initiated by the Canadian labour movement and although there may be some, I couldn't recall any.

With industries such as mining being so prevalent in South Africa, industrial health and safety is a major issue for South African unionists. It is interesting to note that whenever I was around miners and they discovered I was a Canadian miner, they wanted to discuss the recent coal mine disaster at Westray in Nova Scotia. It was during these discussions that we reached agreement that all the safety regulations in the world are useless when they can be breached by greedy employers. At that point we were all just miners and our work sites could have easily been a block apart rather than half a world. My sense of identifying with these miners grew even stronger when I toured an underground mine and listened to the manager make excuses for high accident rates. When he said to me, "I want to run a safe mine, but these people don't want to work safely" I could have sworn I was back in Canada listening to one of the many employers I've heard use that line before. The union's concerns over health and safety are legitimate. The mining industry alone averages two fatalities a day. When you enter a mine in Canada, you will see a safety board that lists the number of days since the last injury. I was shocked to see the safety board at the mine I toured showing not the latest injury, but rather the latest fatality.

The prevalence of mass dismissals is quite staggering. I was told of situations where as many as 5,000 workers were fired due to some type of job action, either a strike or slowdown. In some cases, all the workers would remain jobless while in other cases, some workers, but not all workers would be rehired. As was explained to me, the employers take advantage of this selective re-hiring to purge their workforce of perceived radicals and troublemakers. I was told that trying to challenge mass dismissals through the industrial courts was most frustrat-

ing for the labour movement because they are rarely successful in having the firings overturned. As one representative from the NUM's legal department told me, "The industrial court was set up to be a fair and uncomplicated system, but they have completely lost sight of that objective."

In fact, everyone I met seemed to share the common complaint that the system is inherently unfair to workers. What few laws that are favourable to workers are rarely adhered to by employers and there is very little in the way of recourse for employees who have been treated unfairly.

How are the rank and file members responding to the state of organized labour? If the turnout at meetings is any indication, the answer would have to be positive. The first weekend I was in the country the NUM held rallies that were warm-ups to the union's tenth anniversary celebrations. Tens of thousands of workers and their families came out to these gatherings, including some 50,000 people to a rally in the Orange Free State. The other encouraging trend is the break-down of racial lines within the union movement. A number of white workers are leaving the exclusively white and traditionally employer-oriented unions and joining what in the past have been non-white and more effective labour organizations.

Of course, it's not possible to make a fair comparison between the labour movements of South Africa and Canada. The entire history of the South African union movement has taken place under extreme hardship and struggle. In contrast, a whole generation of Canadian workers has experienced economic and social stability. With the working conditions and standard of living of Canadian workers increasingly under assault by the corporate agenda, the lessons learned by South African workers could prove invaluable in responding to such attacks.

A Constituency for Southern Africa?

The State of the U.S. Movement

BY JIM CASON AND BILL MARTIN

Jim Cason, former Associate Director of the American Committee on Africa, writes frequently about Africa policy issues. Bill Martin teaches on Africa at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and is Co-Chair of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars' Political Action Committee.

For several years now, discussions on the future of solidarity work have been a standard feature at meetings of local anti-apartheid groups, and at regional and national conferences.* At the larger of these meetings, distinguished movement personalities from South Africa have been invited to discuss the future of the North American and European movements. Amidst much high-flown rhetoric and deservedly self-congratulatory pronouncements, the conclusions by now are standard ones: solidarity work faces new challenges that are best met by anti-apartheid organizations developing close links with grass roots organizations in southern and South Africa.

In the United States, the future of solidarity work has been folded into a larger debate on building a "constituency for Africa." Yet the debate and its conclusions have skirted some very tough questions. Seen from the United States, the tasks are far more difficult than is indicated by the discussions to date. The essential question is: given the end of the Cold War and national liberation movements, does there exist a constituency for any form of solidarity movement focused on

Africa, much less southern or South Africa alone?

Disappearing Africa

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the solidarity movement supported national liberation movements in the field and then in power, reaching the present stage of awaiting the election of the ANC. In North America and Europe, broad constituencies were mobilized around these goals, peaking first in 1977 following the Soweto uprisings and then with the wave of anti-apartheid victories in the mid-1980s. In the United States, local constituencies successfully pressured Congress to overturn Ronald Reagan's veto and pass the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. This stunning event was the only such defeat Reagan suffered in all his years in office.

These days are now gone, and not simply with respect to anti-apartheid work. If one surveys local or national political work in relation to southern, South, or continental Africa, there is but one reality: Africa seems to be disappearing from the political map of the United States.

With the gradual demise of minority rule in South Africa and the end of the Cold War, little remains to propel Africa, even South Africa, onto the public agenda. The continent, much less any region of it, has little importance economically or strategically to U.S. policy makers, while the collapse of the last bastion of white settler/colonial rule has removed the symbols of racism that were so effective in mobilization work.

Africa is also falling off the policy map in Washington. As part of its budget cuts late last

year, the Congressional leadership proposed eliminating the House Subcommittee on Africa and folding its efforts into a committee that covers Latin America. Mobilization by African advocacy groups won the Committee a one year reprieve. But none of the Members of Congress traditionally associated with Africa issues, not even a member of the Black Caucus, stepped forward to chair the committee. Florida Rep. Harry Johnston eventually took the post by right of seniority.

On the Senate side, Illinois member Paul Simon remains chair of the Africa Subcommittee.

As we have detailed elsewhere,[†] Clinton's focus on domestic economic issues has not only downgraded foreign policy in general and African policy in particular, but promises little in the way of new initiatives that break with the past.

At first glance, the U.S. invasion of Somalia contradicts these conclusions. In contrast to the Cold War years, liberal Senators and members of Congress, supported by some African advocacy groups, now call for intervention while conservatives stand in opposition to deployment of U.S. forces in Africa. In February, the Black Caucus proposed that if stronger diplomatic efforts fail to oust Mobutu, the U.S. should support Belgian and French military intervention in Zaire.

The recommendation to use non-U.S. military forces - France has over 24,000 troops ready for immediate deployment overseas - reflects a growing concern that large-scale intervention is too costly. A

*See for example the SAR articles by Thede, Dec. 1990; Barker, March 1992; Hermele, May 1992; Swift, Jan.-Feb. 1993.

[†]Association of Concerned Africa Scholars Bulletin, Winter 1993

strong current of thinking maintains that the lesson of Bush's last hurrah in Somalia is, as one of Clinton's advisers told us, "isolate the Somali case, deal with it quickly, and move to prevent yourself from being boxed into other crises in Africa."

In this vein, U.S. interests in Africa would be protected by the UN and other western powers with more direct interests in the continent.

South Africa and African crises

African crises may not be so easy to avoid, especially as the U.S. media has now adopted 'Africa-swollen-belly-war-famine' as a recurrent story line. It is easy to list a series of pressing conflicts, from the Sudan, to Angola, to Zaire, to Mozambique, to South Africa. Yet, in most of these cases, there is little sign of U.S. or African constituencies capable of pressing these issues

onto the U.S. agenda. There is no equivalent, now nor on the horizon, of the great swelling wave of insurgency inside South Africa that propelled direct action in the United States during the mid-1980s. The ANC has all but disappeared from the Washington scene, not to mention across the country, while Africa's new social and democratic movements are too dispersed and fragmented to as yet have a voice inside the United States.

Indeed, as the politics of transition, negotiation, and development have naturally engulfed the ANC's attention, there has been a parallel disengagement by local U.S. solidarity groups. Whatever the judgment on the compromises necessary to ensure majority rule, the ANC's cultivation in the United States of big business, foreign investment, and

aid has often run directly counter to shared premises of past work. A recent article in *Z Magazine*, a leading forum for debates among radical activists, highlighted the dismay of activists at the vigorous participation of big businessmen like diamond merchant Maurice Templesman at a National Conference in Support of the African National Congress and Other Democratic Forces for a New South Africa.

On immediate African policy issues, there is even a direct conflict of positions. What does one make, for example, of Nelson Mandela's statement while in Washington for the Clinton inauguration that "We would expect that the new president would take a keen interest, just as his predecessor President George Bush has done, in facilitating the peace process in our country. We



In 1991 South African activists had support in Harlem. Above, a protest at the Manufacturers Hanover Bank.

Dan Steiger - Impact Visuals

think George Bush did as much as he could do to help the process." Or the ANC's exceedingly mild statements on Angola, weaker than even the recommendations of liberal papers like the *New York Times*, not to mention conservative voices like the *Economist*?

The U.S. movement

One result of these post-Cold War, post-minority rule confusions is a search among some sectors of the U.S. movement for alternative forces, including the PAC.

Africanist and Black Consciousness activists in South Africa charge that the transition is ensuring the continuation of racism by accepting that there will be little change in the wealth, land holdings, and electoral power of white South Africans. It's a position that finds a far more ready response among black youth and students in the U.S. than the apparent liberalism of the ANC's "non-racialism."

Last year, the American Friends Service Committee, which for years toured representatives of the ANC, toured a PAC representative instead.

The strength of the solidarity movement has, of course, not rested among black youth. Much of the old solidarity network remains in place; many long-time activists remain committed to solidarity work. Yet as would be familiar to activists in Canada or Europe, the absence of the Cold War and national liberation movements has steadily eroded the logic and culture of solidarity work.

The responses made by key organizations and networks suggests the struggle to find new paths in an era of declining resources. The Washington Office on Africa has essentially limited its efforts to push for a progressive policy toward Africa to Washington, D.C., but at the cost of its previous work on South Africa and developing a national constituency. TransAfrica remains an important force, but

like WOA, is largely directed at influencing policy makers.

The American Committee on Africa remains committed to a focus on South Africa, as indicated by its recent "Stop Apartheid Violence Week." It is putting in place an effort to carry its labour/church/student constituency beyond the period of majority rule. This will not be easy, as indicated by the ANC's equivocal position on the timing for ending sanctions, and the uncertainty of South African support for code-of-conduct campaigns against multinationals that operate in both the United States and South Africa.

New actors have also appeared on the scene. Human rights groups and relief organizations have become increasingly visible and influential. Amnesty International, for example, can mobilize as many people on African-related human rights issues as many of the older solidarity organizations. And the relief organizations CARE and World Vision played a role in pressing for the U.S. invasion of Somalia. Work by ACOA and the San Francisco-based Sister Community projects to develop links between U.S. and African activists located in trade unions, churches, women, civic and environmental groups also show signs of continuity and even real development.

Future premises and promises

These trends appear at first glance to offer strong support for the conclusion that the future of solidarity work lies in people-to-people, grassroots-to-grassroots links. Lending support to this argument is the claim that the end of the Cold War has placed, even on the U.S. President's lips, the words "human rights" and "democracy."

If only it were so easy. Sceptics have already pointed out a plausible and disastrous scenario that could follow from such a position: the U.S. and its Western allies would utilize the logic of the lack of human

rights, democracy, and sustainable development in Africa to dictate to African governments and peoples. The World Bank and core states would expand their efforts to solicit and fund people-to-people linkages through the selective support of NGOs and even solidarity groups.

As SAR commentators from Europe and Canada have noted, even solidarity groups in their countries became dependent upon state funding during the easy years of the 1980s. And as acerbic African commentators have pointed out, when their states are not being turned into IMF wards, the explosion of foreign advisors and often undemocratic NGOs can all too easily become a form of exceedingly expensive 'low-intensity management warfare'.

No transition is without contradictions and, to some large extent, existing organizations will have to engage and attempt to affect these new players in the field. The ANC and several COSATU affiliates have argued for U.S. supporters to take U.S. funds on the theory that it is better to have movement people as mediators than other NGOs with no movement background. And some U.S. groups have done so. Open discussion of these possibilities at least enables groups in South Africa and in the U.S. to see the dangers as well as the opportunities in this funding.

Is there a future for solidarity work?

Even if this is achieved, however, there still remains the very large question of the substantive basis for a constituency for Africa, or an African solidarity movement. During the period of the struggle to support progressive movements and attack racist minority rule, solidarity activists had a coherent enemy and channel of work. As the struggle against colonialism won victories, it has narrowed from Africa, to southern Africa, and then South Africa during the last, long phase of the overthrow of minority and settler rule. The last



1991 New York demonstrator at South African consulate on Soweto Day

pivot is now disappearing. Yet the discussion to date has rarely confronted the absence of what has historically underpinned solidarity work.

Taking this argument to its extreme, one might claim that there exists little justification, much less future, for solidarity work focused on South or southern Africa, or Africa as a whole. While the most vibrant channels of work are grassroots-to-grassroots relationships, these have not coalesced along continental or regional lines, as was the phenomenon of supporting struggles to seize state power. What role, one might ask, is there for the TCLSACs, ACOAs, etc.? Are they to be more than simply gathering houses of past expertise on South and southern Africa, providing information and contacts for activists working in environmental, women's, labour movements?

Activists like ACOA's Richard

Knight respond that there is still a core of committed activists around the country. More than 1,000 people turned out for a national conference in solidarity with the ANC in New York last November, and a series of six regional conferences organized by the Africa Fund in 1992/93 drew audiences of between 30 and 50 people for day-long workshops on future activism on southern Africa. This core of committed activists, many with ten to thirty years of anti-apartheid experience, should not be discounted. They form an important resource for any future movement - but without a focus there is no way they can sustain the level of pressure generated at any time during the 1980s.

There is one channel that does offer the prospect of an African focus: the direct cultural heritage and links between Africa and the United States. In the United States, the symbols of Africa,

however ambiguous, have never been more widely spread across popular culture. The language and actions surrounding such symbols reveal, moreover, a highly charged attack by black youth upon the racist treatment of all people of African descent. At many U.S. universities, forums with an Afro-centric focus regularly draw audiences in the thousands, and a recent four-day African heritage fair in Los Angeles drew tens of thousands of people.

Yet, as in Canada and Europe, the U.S. solidarity movement has almost no role in these developments. And this is despite the vulnerability of politicians to the charge of racism, as became evident in the airing of the racist premises of the U.S. government's and media's focus on white Bosnia versus black Somalia (prior to the U.S. invasion). Solidarity activists are, of course, hardly alone in this respect. In a revealing comparison to debates in

South African townships, many have noted statements by black youth in this country dismissing the agenda, leadership and institutions of the old civil rights movement.

Longtime activist Prexy Nesbitt, who now works at the MacArthur Foundation, argues that the "potential of the African-American community remains at the highest level for any group in the United States. But it is just that, it is a potential and too much of it right now is based on an emotional mobilization. The challenge is to turn the emotional reservoir of energy that exists within the African-American community into an organized, mobilized, informed mass of projects and mass action on behalf of the people of Africa. The wearing of 'X' has to be translated into organized action based on an informed analysis. That will help turn the African American community into the forefront of an informed citizenry in the United States."

Where the U.S. movement does have some strength is among local black opinion makers and elected officials. "Our activists are in," says ACOA Projects Director Dumisani Kumalo. Reeling off a list of names that includes the governor of Washington State, the treasurer of Oregon, the Deputy Mayor of Denver and members of Congress from Los Angeles, Louisiana and Florida, Kumalo says "they were all founders of local anti-apartheid efforts and many of them won their offices in 1992 partly by campaigning on South Africa." He notes that Avel Gordley, a former chair of the Oregon anti-apartheid movement, won her position in the State Legislature in 1992 in part by promising to reimpose sanctions on South Africa that had been lifted the previous year. Many of the black elected officials coming to power today cut their teeth in the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s.

In Kumalo's view these officials and the movements that elected them could potentially form a strong

part of the movement in the 1990s. ACOA is working with the Oregon legislature to ensure that their bill reimposing sanctions also calls for the sanctions to be replaced by a code for socially responsible investment when sanctions have been lifted. And the committee last year won approval from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Conference of State Legislators for work on a code of conduct at the point when sanctions are lifted. But even Kumalo notes, the movement still hasn't developed long-term campaigns that have a resonance in this community.

Another channel might be presented by some of the strands of the current debate on North American regional economic integration, however different links between the U.S. and Africa are from U.S.-Canadian-Mexican relationships. When the NAFTA debate moves beyond crass national protectionism and attempts to save U.S. jobs by denying Mexicans or Canadians work, it begins to focus on how trade unions, farmers, environmentalists, and urban social movements can establish their own links as they seek to confront together multinational corporations. Those working on Africa would do well to look at the frank and often difficult discussions now taking place between, for instance, unionists from Mexico, Canada and the United States, where solidarity is being replaced by self-interest.

Yet discussing concrete needs across national boundaries opens up hidden tensions among movements. When the National Union of Mineworkers sent a delegation to Europe to discuss lifting the ban on South African coal when sanctions ended, they found European and North American unions arguing that even after sanctions were lifted the ban on coal had to stay in place to protect jobs in the first world. Miners in the United States have begun to take these talks to the next step with debates about rais-

ing wages and living standards in South Africa, but these are much more difficult conversations as workers in both countries confront pit closures.

Putting it all together

For many, the phenomena and trends we have illuminated point to quite depressing conclusions. The end of the Cold War and national liberation movements, and the apparent strength of global capital and Western states, seem to leave little room for new forms of solidarity work. The declining strategic and economic importance of Africa for U.S. policy-makers seems only to further emphasize the continuing decline of the solidarity movement.

Yet one must note equally impressive countervailing, if long-term, trends. It is not simply that the end of anti-communist crusades and the overblown expectations of the fruits of state power have opened new doors. In very concrete ways, never before have local activists been forced to recognize and confront the ties that link the future of their communities and those overseas. This is as true for workers confronting capital flight as it is for environmentalists and those in the anti-racist movement; everywhere activists are increasingly driven to form alliances with communities well beyond the boundaries of their own states.

For those who have long laboured in the fields of African solidarity work, however, the question remains: where and to what extent can these long-term opportunities be forged into realities? Can solidarity activists of the past generation avoid being reduced to being study groups on pressing problems like global warming, debt, the terms of trade, or even the global racial order? As pressing as these problems are for the people of Africa, how can they be transformed into agendas that offer real programs for action for local activists in Dallas, Seattle, or Miami?

AIDS in South Africa: The Democratic Movement Responds

BY JUDITH HEAD

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In October 1992, an historic conference took place in Johannesburg when over 100 organizations representing the progressive movement and the state met in a first step to develop a national AIDS strategy for South Africa.

The first conference of the National AIDS Convention of South Africa (NACOSA) was a joint initiative by the ANC and the Department of National Health and Population Development (the Ministry of Health). It didn't escape criticism afterwards about the organization of the Conference and the role and composition of the steering committee. Nevertheless, it was a milestone in the struggle against HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Such a conference would not even have been conceivable three years ago.

The apartheid state and AIDS

To understand the approach and particular struggles of the democratic movement in South Africa on the HIV/AIDS question, it is necessary first to look at the political and social context within which attitudes towards the epidemic have developed.

Three-quarters of South Africa's people still do not have the right to vote and as many as one-third have had their right to South African citizenship stripped from them. The migrant labour system, which separates husbands from wives and women from their children, is institutionalized. There are vast inequalities of wealth and poverty determined by race: the

poor are predominantly black, the rich predominantly white.

The prime role of the state to protect and defend the interests and privileges of the ruling capitalist class and its white, middle-class allies, have meant, among other things, that legislation protecting workers' rights is very limited. The basic provisions of a social welfare system that people living in social democracies take for granted - adequate health insurance and care, unemployment pay, pensions and the like - simply do not exist for the majority of South Africans.

Employers still enjoy wide powers to hire and fire and there is no protection against racist and sexist discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of their HIV status. Employers can initiate pre-employment screening of potential employees, and several big private companies and parastatals do so. They can dismiss workers found to be HIV-positive or those suffering from AIDS. They are not obliged to provide health insurance and where it is provided, it usually excludes those who are HIV-positive from coverage or imposes a financial ceiling that is hopelessly inadequate to deal with the needs of those requiring medication.

The "racial" division of society has led to the creation of a bureaucratic/administrative nightmare, a situation from which the health services are not exempt. There are, for instance, 17 different departments responsible for the implementation of health policy and delivery of services. Services are unequal and uneven. The vast majority of whites have health insurance and get high-quality service and care in the private sector. The increasingly under-

funded state sector serves the needs of the black majority. The further from a big city you go, the worse the services become, until in some of the bantustans, facilities are worse than those in the poorest countries in Africa.

Health services are geared towards curative medicine and it is only very recently that some headway has been made by those advocating the need for preventive programmes that involve the community.

The legacy of deeply institutionalized racism today hampers efforts by those working in the state sector to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. Yet it is not just a history of racism that bedevils government efforts. Homophobia is the norm. Homosexuality is still technically illegal, although more widely tolerated than in the past. The prevailing sexual ethos is a mixture of Calvinist prudery on the one hand and of homophobic "machismo."

Discrimination against women in all fields of employment continues and a lack of respect for women is ubiquitous. Sex education in the schools, along with a broader social science curriculum, is underdeveloped, and tends to reinforce prevailing norms.

Within this context, it is hardly surprising that the state's response to the HIV epidemic has been inadequate. It can be divided into four stages. There was a first period in which the infection was associated with the high-risk behaviour of homosexual men. Gay (white) men were seen as a small, deviant and closed group, which made unlikely the transmission of the virus to the heterosexual population.

The government early on made it very clear that it considered HIV infection/AIDS to be a "gay" problem, and considered it the gay community's own responsibility.

In the second phase, the focus shifted to migrant workers. AIDS was associated with foreign, black workers. This period coincided with the total onslaught phase of the apartheid state's policy when the regime sought to strengthen white solidarity by identifying a threat around which the group could unite. Measures taken to deal with the supposed problem were administrative, punitive and discriminatory. Legislation was passed which allowed HIV antibody testing of foreign workers entering the country. Those found to be HIV-positive could be repatriated and some were.

During the third phase, it was alleged that ANC guerillas were carriers of the virus. At a time when the mass struggle was gaining momentum, there was an attempt to create an association between liberation politics and what

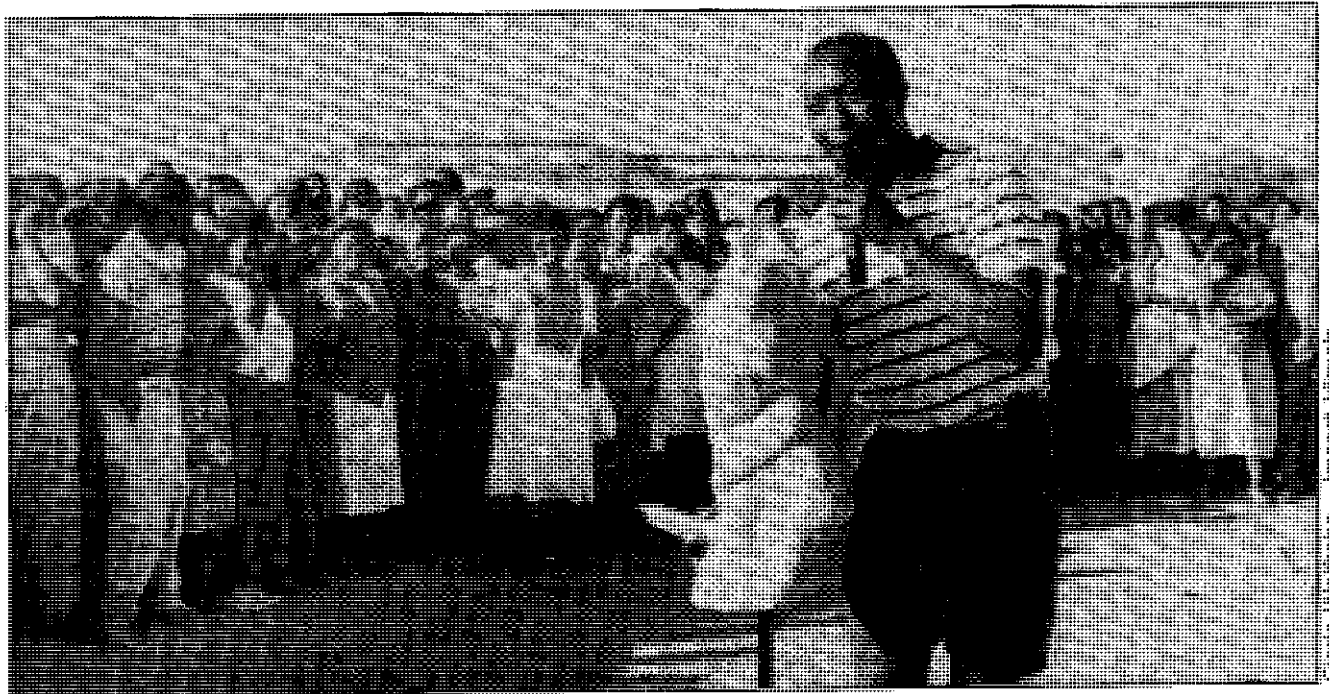
was portrayed as an unknown but "killer" disease.

Behind these three views lay a set of assumptions about sexual behaviour and HIV infection. It was assumed that gay men behaved in ways different from straight men and women that made them particularly vulnerable to infection. It was also assumed that black foreign workers or Umkhonto we Sizwe ("MK") guerillas are "promiscuous." By implication white South Africans were not.

Until about 1991, when a shift in policy took place and a fourth phase opened, there was what amounted to an official silence about the implications of the spread of HIV/AIDS. Because the infection was not seen as a threat to the majority of whites (and in particular the supporters of the National Party), there was not a problem. Such an attitude, of course, displayed a cynical disregard for South Africa's black population. Hence, resources devoted to public information and education campaigns were negligible.

In 1990/91 the budget allocation was R5.4 million. According to the South African Institute of Race Relations, this had to cover "AIDS education, advertising, training and paying people to deliver education, surveillance projects, the National Institute of Virology and AIDS training and information centres." This lack of resources was reflected in the lack of information available. There was no advertising on television and radio and certainly no mass, nation-wide educational campaigns. This silence has been described by one researcher as amounting almost to "symbolic genocide."

The situation began to change in the late 1980s with the establishment of government-funded AIDS Training, Information and Counselling Centres (ATICCs) and the formation of a National AIDS Research Programme within the Medical Research Council. The ATICCs, initially five and recently increased to ten, have a fair degree of autonomy. In Cape Town, at least, they have played a valuable role in training trainers, making informa-



Cape Town, instruction in the correct use of a condom after "Puppets against AIDS" show in Guguletu

tion available and networking with other groups working in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention. The national AIDS programme, under the direction of Dr. Malcolm Steinberg, has also played an important role in networking and facilitating serious study, research and discussion of the nature of the epidemic and the most effective ways of dealing with it.

Despite these initiatives, however, it was not until the beginning of 1991 that the government really went public on the extent of the epidemic. In March that year it was officially acknowledged that HIV/AIDS had already reached epidemic proportions. It was during this period that the state started to launch its first major education/awareness campaigns, and sought, however clumsily, to acknowledge the existence of other, non-governmental groups working in the field and to work with them.

The democratic movement and AIDS

It is within this context that the role of the democratic movement and other organizations of civil society in combatting HIV/AIDS must be situated. The gay community was the first to be hit by the infection in South Africa. The threat to public health was brushed aside by the government, who refused to provide resources or support either to help those affected or prevent the virus from spreading.

It is hardly surprising then that the gay community has been at the forefront of HIV/AIDS work since the mid-1980s. Its approach, greatly influenced by the work of other progressive gay groups elsewhere, has been to provide a welcoming and supportive meeting place where worried people, men and women, gay and heterosexual, can get information, have an anonymous test and, if diagnosed HIV-positive, receive support from people living with HIV/AIDS.

The gay community has also been very active in the educational

field. At first, its programmes were directed at gay men but have been expanded to include other people. The gay community's approach has been guided by the need for openness, the need to avoid making judgements and the need to meet the people it wants to work with on their own ground. Its approach to education is participatory and empowering. Because homosexuality is still technically an offence and people with HIV/AIDS are not protected from discrimination under the law, much attention has also been devoted to promoting gay rights and campaigning for the rights of those with HIV/AIDS.

The second strand of the broad progressive movement is made up of trade unions, the liberation movement and progressive health care workers and their organizations. These groups were brought together at the International Conference on Health in Southern Africa held in Maputo in April 1990. Delegates gave the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network the responsibility to coordinate and lead work on HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Conference delegates also drafted a statement setting out the parameters in which this work was to develop. It stressed that the HIV/AIDS campaign should not be stigmatizing or discriminatory, it must be rooted in community action and involve the political leadership and, while stressing the need for individual behavioral change, it had to be set within a social context.

The Conference also emphasized the urgent need to address the wider societal factors promoting the spread of the infection. These were identified as poverty, the migrant labour system, forced removals, population relocation, unemployment, and the lack of education and adequate health care for most of the country's people.

Individual unions and COSATU agreed in Maputo to work within these broad parameters. The Food and Allied Worker's Union

(FAWU), for instance, first launched an educational campaign among its workers in the Western Cape in 1989. FAWU's AIDS policy emerged from this work and was formally adopted by the Union's Congress in June 1991. What FAWU drew from its own experience was that a policy has to emerge from an education campaign rather than precede it and should apply equally to all categories of workers. It must have the wholehearted support of union leadership and membership; that is, it must be owned by the union that intends to implement it. These are principles that challenge the behaviour of many employers and the attitudes of some unions that pay lip service to the need for a campaign. Such a lack of real commitment produces elaborate policies that have no teeth and do not touch the lives or address the concerns of ordinary workers.

FAWU's policy also opposes practices that effectively discriminate against workers with HIV infection - pre-employment screening of potential workers for HIV and testing during employment. It does, of course, support and advocate the right of individual workers to a confidential and anonymous test, accompanied by pre- and post-test counselling. FAWU upholds the workers' right to confidentiality and stresses that workers should not be obliged to disclose their HIV status. Finally, the policy stresses the need for worker-controlled educational campaigns in workplaces, the union and the communities from which workers are drawn. All campaigns should always include the distribution of free condoms.

The FAWU policy, then, takes up many of the issues that are part of the day-to-day struggle in the South African workplace. Many employers still insist, for example, on pre-employment screening. Others do not respect the workers' right to confidentiality and dismiss workers living with HIV. Many workplaces elaborate HIV/AIDS poli-

cies designed by management with no worker participation. Sometimes, the educational campaigns that should flow from them exist in name only.

However, despite the lead taken by the FAWU, the National Union Mineworkers and COSATU itself, the response of the trade union movement to the epidemic has been uneven. Many unions are desperately underfunded. Others, struggling to save jobs and secure higher wages for their members, do not see HIV/AIDS as a priority. Nevertheless, the momentum is growing. In 1992, an AIDS Consortium was formed, based at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, to take forward the work initiated in Maputo. Forty-five organizations working in the AIDS field came together to develop a specific agenda of promoting and protecting the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. These groups present a united front on important policy issues, respond to media coverage, are developing a data base, organizing and facilitating conferences and workshops and publishing a newsletter.

In 1992 the government's own AIDS budget went up to R20 million and the AIDS programme of the

Ministry of Health was reorganized. Centralized control was relinquished in favour of much more autonomy to regional offices and the programme has become more committed to collaborating with non-government organizations.

More, perhaps, than in any other part of the world, the struggle for a progressive, non-discriminatory HIV/AIDS policy has formed part of a wider struggle against discriminatory practices in the workplace and wider society. The state's recent implicit acknowledgement in its support for NACOSA, that it can no longer go it alone, that it must support the work of groups that have the respect of the people, is a huge step forward and a victory for South Africa's democratic forces.

The struggle for a humane policy on HIV/AIDS has informed the debate on and struggle for constitutional rights. It has opened up the debate on the nature of human sexuality and sexual behaviour and challenged the prevailing homophobic and sexist ideology. It has brought together individuals and groups from a wide variety of constituencies who are concerned about the devastating impact the epidemic is likely to have on South African society.

Nevertheless, and despite the growing momentum from different quarters, the work is uneven.

Millions of people remain at risk, either because they do not have access to information and condoms or because the social conditions in which they live mean that they are particularly vulnerable to the infection. Exploring the broad range of sexual behaviours that exist and challenging racist myths about African sexuality is a major challenge. Much more work needs to be done on patterns of sexual behaviour, on the trigger events that shape an individual's sexual choices, and on overcoming the gap between theory and practice and translating knowledge into action.

But there is also an urgent need to investigate the social conditions which fan the epidemic. Recent research suggests that it is no accident that the poor are particularly vulnerable to the infection. Not because they are necessarily more "promiscuous" than well-off people, but because their poor health leaves them more vulnerable to infection, whatever their sexual behaviour. If this is the case, attacking the conditions of poverty should become a major part of a successful campaign against HIV/AIDS.

CIDA Pulls the Plug

BY JUDITH MARSHALL

Judith Marshall is a Toronto-based writer and popular educator working for the Humanity Fund of the United Steelworkers of America.

Good-bye poverty alleviation directed to the poorest of the poor. Welcome to aid in line with "the competitiveness agenda." An "International Policy Assistance Update" prepared by External Affairs pundits and leaked to the public last January proposed an aid policy dramatically different from the all-party consensus reached af-

ter extensive public debate in 1987. The twin pillar system introduced in the leaked document gives new prominence to "development cooperation" promoting commercial relations and private investors. Enter the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Hemispheric Initiatives policy which will broaden the NAFTA to a bloc from Alaska to Tierra Del Fuego. Countries/regions deemed of strategic interest for economic cooperation in the document include Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador and CARICOM. Significant allocations

from the reserve fund are designated for "investment opportunities" in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe. Meanwhile aid to Africa is being downgraded and "development assistance" delivering humanitarian relief to the poorest of the poor is dramatically cut back.

The document's drafters claim a new public consensus supporting the market economy. In an era offering us 35 brands of light beer but only one brand of economy, it is deemed logical to privatize aid, bringing yet one more public policy into line

with the "competitiveness agenda." The stated aim of the new policy is to "assist the private sector to position itself for long-term market penetration in priority markets."

A draft was leaked to the aid community at the end of January with an official version handed over to Ottawa-based NGOs in early February. The original game plan was to put the document before Cabinet in February and present it to the Canadian public as a done deal. Hopefully this will prove impossible as a result of widespread public outrage.

The main framework of the new policy consists of:

- identification of "acupuncture points where Canada can achieve maximum influence" based on principles of concentration, foreign policy priorities and effectiveness.
- targeting 6 to 8 countries/regions as "economic cooperation countries," where CIDA's central aim would be to "foster free market economic systems and bring developing and transition countries into the international system" (Pakistan, India, Indonesia, China, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt and the Magreb).
- targeting 8 to 10 countries/regions as "development assistance" countries, (SADC, Ghana, Senegal, Mali, Cameroun, Peru, Guyana, Jamaica and Bangladesh).
- tapping reserve funds for economic cooperation programmes with Russia, Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. for reasons of national interest "including the enhancement of our security and the development of democratic regimes and market economies compatible with our own."
- establishing "thematic funds" for HR/GG/DD, environment and economic cooperation. IIR/GG/DD signifies Human Rights, Good Governance and Democratic Development. These thematic funds will allow maintenance of "credible Canadian presence in selected countries

through promotion of key foreign policy priorities."

- reducing shares in regional development banks
- reducing contributions to UN programmes
- terminating the development information programme
- increasing funding for humanitarian assistance

"Canada is dependent on developing countries for our own sustainable development. The more advanced developing countries are growth points for our markets. These opportunities will substantially increase with NAFTA."

- increasing funding for the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- dramatically reducing budget allocations for the voluntary sector. The leaked document showed funding decreasing from 260 million dollars in 1992/3 to 106 million dollars in 1993/4.

The communications strategy of the leaked document will fuel the fire of Canadians already feeling manipulated by powerful elites. Working from recent Decima polls on Canadian attitudes the spin doctors set out wilfully to manipulate public opinion, targeting three sectors for special handling.

The general public is to be placated with assurances that the new policies are broadly in line with its concerns. The line is that reductions in aid dollars and our own economic recovery require establishment of these strategic priorities.

NGOs are identified as "the most vocal, articulate and self-interested (sic) sector" from whom many "specific campaigns for individual organizations under threat and for NGO funding overall" can be anticipated. The NGOs are to be presented with arguments that concentration will mean greater impact on NGO priorities like human rights, environment and the poor. Other avenues of funding available to NGOs include ample opportunities as government contractors through bilateral programmes, thematic funds and reserve funds.

The business sector poses no problem for the communications strategists. Business "should be pleased with the visibility given to the private sector." Both the economic cooperation fund and the designation of economic cooperation countries "will provide new opportunities for Canadian businesses." No "self-interest" at stake here!

Labour groups are not deemed to have any interests at stake in the aid policy shifts, an assumption challenged by a number of trade unions. The United Steelworkers issued a news release on February 12 accusing the government of "diverting aid dollars away from third world relief and development to private sector corporate interests as embodied in NAFTA." Canadian Director Leo Gerard questioned the appropriateness of a special interest group like the corporate sector benefiting from aid dollars to pursue its private entrepreneurial interests. Gerard indicated that if the government persisted in redirecting aid funds towards Canadian businesses to establish themselves in countries such as Mexico and Chile and Poland, "then it must establish a new funding window for Canadian labour to support the development of autonomous labour organizations in these countries," thereby furthering labour's legitimate concerns for human and trade union rights, a living wage, health and safety and environmental standards.

We were particularly struck by the spirit of reconciliation displayed by the non-racial leaders toward their new colleagues. Their own sports careers had been crippled by apartheid and many of them were jailed for their activism. "We are prepared to let bygones be bygones in order to make some real change," Richard Chauke, the national organizer of the unified table tennis federation, explained. In fact, the spirit of cooperation was so prevalent during the weekend meeting we attended that one leader from the establishment side told me that on the basis of NOCSA's experience, the idea of an "interim government" for the country as a whole should be scrapped in favour of general elections on a one-person one-vote franchise.

Nevertheless, the task of bringing sports to the long oppressed black population will occupy these bright and energetic people for decades to come. In the townships and rural areas, there is only a rudimentary infrastructure - instruction, facilities, equipment, and competition - available for sports. Development is further complicated by the deplorable state of housing, public health, education and employment, and the continuing legacy of apartheid. Given the "sport for all" ambitions of the non-racial movement, for example, it would seem logical to channel sports development through the public schools. Yet with the collapse of black education in many areas, most schools are incapable of responding to the challenge. Even if they were, the fact that the responsibility for education is still divided between 17 racially-defined departments adds to the difficulties. (Organizing non-racial interscholastic competition under these circumstances is very difficult to imagine.) Another candidate for broadly-based sports development is the municipal recreation department. Where it exists at all in the townships, it is woefully underfunded. For these rea-

sons, most of the development programs started in the last few years are delivered by the sports federations and community clubs. Even if they live up to their contractual obligations - NOCSA has just begun to monitor them - they will only touch a small percentage of the interested population.

I have long been familiar with the statistics of apartheid inequality, but I was not prepared for the staggering disparities we witnessed on the ground. Soweto is South Africa's largest city, with 2.8 million school age children, not including squatters. Apart from the well-maintained Orlando Stadium (where special coaching in soccer is available for the best 30 or so boys in every age group), the few available playing fields are rocky and uneven, with as much dirt as grass. Mules graze where the much-publicized cricket development program is conducted. Their presence is tolerated because they keep the grass short. At Soweto's only 400-metre track, the grass grows wild on the infield, with the result that no one can use it.

I knew, of course, that there were magnificent facilities in the white areas, but I was not quite prepared to see just how lavish they were. In Johannesburg and Cape Town, it seemed that every white high school has an endless stretch of beautifully manicured playing fields and specialized facilities (they all reminded me of Upper Canada College). Public parks and recreation facilities in white municipalities were equally good. The private Wanderers' Club in Johannesburg, stretching over an area about the size of the University of Toronto, boasts a 50-metre swimming pool, 18 playing fields, an 18-hole golf course and a 80,000-seat cricket stadium.

Some white clubs recruit outstanding black athletes and engage in competitions with black clubs, but membership fees and the time and cost of transportation remain imposing barriers. In addition, some black parents are reluctant to let

their children go into white neighbourhoods for fear they will disappear. (The same is true for white parents and black neighbourhoods, making defaults commonplace in the few attempts at non-racial leagues.) For the most part, the idea of shared use on a large scale is still a distant dream. Some within the non-racial leadership, such as Cheryl Roberts of Cape Town, express disappointment that an affirmative action plan to share facilities was not achieved as part of the unity process.

Not surprisingly, the politics of development pervade all discussion, whether it's about where to schedule competitions, who should be selected for representative teams, or whether NOCSA should follow IOC directives to institute a drug-testing program. In each case, there is a move to negotiate a trade-off to satisfy the blacks' desire for democracy and development and the whites' for international competition, which provided the basis for non-racial unity.

For example, it costs about 300 rands to test an athlete for the drugs on the IOC's ever-growing banned list, money which is desperately needed for development. But among anti-apartheid sports activists there is a feeling that South Africa should be seen internationally as capable of screening visiting athletes, such as the large numbers of European athletes who take advantage of South Africa's southern-hemisphere climate for training. The price, however, is that South Africa therefore meets a very expensive first world requirement in a local setting of mainly third world athletes. Yet the activists don't want to be misunderstood - they want to line up with what seems to be progressive thinking in the developed countries. In the wake of the scandal around Katarina Krabbe, the German sprinter whose random test at a South African training session was interpreted to reveal the abnormalities usually associated with steroids, those concerned with maintaining

international support (including a majority of the NOCSA executive) want the assurance that they are not unwittingly providing a haven for users. Therefore they reluctantly conduct expensive tests that others outside the country would question. Nevertheless, when we were there in January, a compromise was being sought to initiate domestic testing but keep the costs to a minimum.

As this example illustrates, the debates between high performance and development no longer divide strictly along the old apartheid non-racial lines. Many from the non-racial side now seek the benefits and legitimacy of international competition. This is particularly the case for the ANC, which seeks to manage the international schedule for the major sports of soccer, cricket and rugby to enhance its image among whites and moderate blacks. In January, for example, ANC endorsement ensured that the 1994 World Cup of rugby will be held in South Africa. While some supporters privately grumbled that they were not consulted about the timing, and there was no *quid pro quo* for development, the decision garnered the ANC much favourable publicity. Throughout the country, front pages and newscasts gave Oliver Tambo and ANC sports officer Steve Tshwete the credit for bringing the month-long tournament to South Africa. It was only two days later that the Government managed to salvage some attention by announcing that it was behind the World Cup, too.

The high performance vs. development debate will only intensify as South Africa begins the serious bidding for the 2004 Olympics. Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg all seek the Games. NOCSA will choose the South African representative in 1994 (and the IOC the site in 1997). The idea is to spur investment in sports facilities, provide capital for new housing (the Olympic Villages) and improve local transportation. There is also a

widespread feeling that an Olympics would help keep all of Africa on the international agenda, and counteract the shift in aid and investment to eastern Europe. But as anyone familiar with what has happened in recent host cities (or the debates on the Toronto bid for '96) will attest, creating a plan that will really put additional resources into disadvantaged areas will be enormously difficult.

The fact that so much hinges upon the volunteer sector illustrates the dilemma of getting too far ahead of the political negotiations. The organizational achievements of the last year indicate that a healthy, autonomous sports movement will play an important role in the decisions ahead. Yet any significant redistribution and development of sports resources will also require the intervention of a democratic state. Recognizing this, ANC sports policy calls for the creation of a National Sports Commission, with a broad development mandate. But that's very much in the future. In the meantime, the Nats continue to channel large amounts of money to events that feature whites, while virtually ignoring NOCSA and the NSC. The important promise of development is carried virtually alone by the non-racial leadership, many of whom are volunteers, and their fledgling new federations. Their members and the vociferous sports media primarily judge them on their ability to regulate competition, find sponsors and field successful representative teams, the traditional roles of such organizations. In this climate, proposals to improve opportunities for the victims of apartheid must be linked to – and risk being overshadowed by – a high-performance agenda that will invariably privilege the well-established white clubs and communities.

I suspect that the absence of democratic state programs also contributes to the widespread sexism so prevalent in South African sports. We met a number of able and ex-

perienced female administrators and coaches – at the junior level, for instance, there are more women coaching cricket than men – but very few of them hold senior positions of leadership. There's not a single woman on the NOCSA executive. At the meeting we attended, women presented example after example of discrimination and outrageous paternalism, but there seemed little interest in righting the balance. The "chill" against gender equity reminded me of Canadian sports in the 1960s. Sportswomen are beginning to organize, but it will be a long haul. They fear that while they may help create a non-racial society, it will not be a non-sexist one.

The above changes present fresh challenges to the international solidarity movements. Anti-apartheid veterans repeatedly asked us to thank Canadians for their support – "the sanctions really worked"!!! – but then took pains to point out that they have left the moratorium behind. In many ways, all the familiar prohibitions are now reversed. It felt very strange, but we were encouraged to patronize South African Airlines and (after the final sanctions are removed) purchase South African wines and other long banned products in an effort to rebuild the economy for a democratic transition.

Activists' greatest concern is that the western capitalist countries – many of which benefited from the super-profits of apartheid – not forget South Africa just as blacks are about to come into power. They hope that more governments will invest in grassroots sports and physical education in conjunction with other forms of assistance, and they point out that the rest of southern Africa is in even greater need of such help. They urge us to ensure that, when South African teams play abroad, they are seen as representatives of non-racial sports and the aspirations for a new, democratic society – not de Klerk's bankrupt state.

These, too, are important tasks.

ANGOLA

DEMOCRACY IN THE 'NEW WORLD ORDER'

When Elections are Not Enough

*A panel discussion of
the Angolan elections of
September 1992 and
their violent aftermath*

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(TCLSAC, Southern Africa Repo
moderator: Marlene Green
(former CUSO Field Staff officer fo
southern Africa)
panellists: Daniel dos Santos
(University of Ottawa)
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