

TAKING DEMOCRACY SERIOUSLY

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Worker Expectations and Parliamentary
Democracy in South Africa

David Ginsburg, Eddie Webster

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Worker Expectations and
Parliamentary Democracy in
South Africa



**By David Ginsburg, Eddie Webster, Roger Southall,
Geoff Wood, Sakhela Buhlungu, Johann Maree,
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PREFACE

This book has been a collective effort throughout, and the authors claim joint responsibility for whatever merits or demerits it may have. It is based on the first of three planned surveys aimed at systematically exploring workers' changing expectations of parliamentary democracy in South Africa. This survey was conducted in 1994. The second will be in 1996 and the third in 1998.

The inspiration for the project came from David Ginsburg, who otherwise was involved in the writing of chapters one, four and eight. Janet Cherry joined Gilton Klerck in writing chapter six, and collaborated in the final editing of the text. Richard Haines, Eddie Webster and Gilton Klerck wrote chapter five, while Johan Maree and Geoff Wood wrote chapter three.

Sakhela Buhlungu was the sole author of chapter seven, versions of which appeared in the *South African Labour Bulletin* Volume 18 Numbers 2 and 3. Roger Southall co-authored chapter four and helped edit the final document. Eddie Webster also co-authored chapters one, five and eight, and Geoff Wood wrote chapter two and did all sorts of wonderful things with the computer.

Special thanks is extended to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) National, the National Labour and Economic Development Institute (Naledi), the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (Case) and individual firms and unions who extended their full cooperation and support, without which this study would not have been possible.

The interest and enthusiasm of individual respondents should also be noted. Thanks is due to the research assistants who conducted the interviews or were involved in the process of data capture, and to Roddy Fox for the cartography. In particular, we would like to thank the 1994 industrial sociology final year class at the University of Witwatersrand, who conducted half of the interviews. A high level of professionalism was displayed by all, as well as dedication that went beyond the call of duty.

We would like to acknowledge the significant financial support of the

been possible. Thanks also for the contributions of John Copelyn and Yunus Shaik, whose encouragement along the way has been greatly appreciated.

We would also like to acknowledge the Universities of Natal, Cape Town, Rhodes and Port Elizabeth, and the Sociology of Work Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand, for their funding contributions.

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ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
Cawu	Construction and Allied Workers Union
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
Cusa	Council of Unions of South Africa
CWIU	Chemical Workers Industrial Union
Fedsal	Federation of South African Labour Unions
Fosatu	Federation of South African Trade Unions
GWU	General Workers Union
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
Mawu	Metal and Allied Workers Union
Nactu	National Council of Trade Unions
Nedlac	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NEF	National Economic Forum
NMC	National Manpower Commission
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
Potwa	Post and Telecommunications Workers Association
PR	Proportional Representation
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
Saawu	South African Allied Workers Union
Saccawu	South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union
SACP	South African Communist Party
Sactu	South African Congress of Trade Unions
Sactwu	South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union
Sadtu	South African Democratic Teachers Union
Samwu	South African Municipal Workers Union
Tuacc	Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council
UDF	United Democratic Front
WPGWU	Western Province General Workers Union



WHAT KIND OF DEMOCRACY?

The transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa aroused immense enthusiasm and interest around the world. Massive global attention was devoted to the country's first genuinely democratic elections, held on April 27, 1994.

The elections saw the triumph of the African National Congress (ANC) with nearly 63% of the vote, and replacement of the previous National Party government by a multi-party but ANC dominated Government of National Unity.

The truly remarkable transformation - what Adam and Moodley described in 1993 as a 'negotiated revolution' - has seen South Africa warmly welcomed back into the international community and widely cited as a model for other conflict torn states to emulate.

The ostensibly similar processes that occurred in Latin America and Central Europe towards the end of the 1980s generated a considerable literature on the nature of transitions generally, some of which offered insights peculiarly appropriate to events in South Africa.

Not surprisingly, therefore, much of the burgeoning literature which has begun to consider the particularities of the South African transition has been versed in these terms (Van Zyl Slabbert 1992; Du Toit 1990).

The burden of the 'transition literature' has, of course, been concerned with assessing the prospects for liberal democracy. This in turn has implied a focus on maintaining order and political stability - elusive conditions widely deemed necessary for the success of liberal democracy - as well as on the nation state as a unit of analysis. It has also implied a stress on a politics of 'compression' - demobilisation of popular forces which in most cases were instrumental in propelling the transition.

Our concern in this book is rather different. We too have chosen to proceed from the insights of transition theory. We too focus upon the

But our particular interest is with the role of the labour movement in the transition process, and whether the nature and extent of the democratisation on offer will satisfy and contain the aspirations of South Africa's organised workers.

If it does not, we may conclude either that the labour movement - and perhaps other popular social forces - will attempt to push beyond the boundaries of democracy as it has arrived in South Africa or, more alarmingly, that the newly democratic regime may resort to authoritarian means to re-impose a politics of order.

The immediate stimulus of this work was an interest on the part of the Durban based Workers College to analyse the political attitudes of members of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in the run up to the 1994 general elections.

The result was a survey of worker opinions, conducted in April 1994 with the cooperation of Cosatu. Although we hope our findings will be of use to the labour movement and of interest to a much wider audience, the interpretation of the data collected, and how we chose to present it, is our responsibility alone.

At the end of the day, what lies at the base of this work is concern that, while transition theory seems to imply that the success of democratisation relies upon a process of 'elite pacting', or a limited broadening of the distribution of political power, South Africa's new democracy - if it is to be a democracy in more than just name - must bring both material benefits and a better quality of life to all people of all classes, creeds and races.

That, after all, was what the struggle against apartheid was all about.

Theorising transition ✓

The theorist whose work we use as a starting point is Adam Przeworski, whose *Democracy and the Market* (1991) provides a particularly succinct and systematic analysis of the transition process in recently democratised countries. Adler and Webster (1995: 83-84) elaborate further.

Underlying this theory is the assumption that successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy can only be brought about as a result

of negotiations, of pacts between reformers in the state and moderates in the opposition.

"The political implication is that pro-democratic forces must be prudent; they must be prepared to offer concessions in exchange for democracy." (Przeworski 1991: 98)

Przeworski argues that very few transitions to democracy are the result of a revolutionary rupture where the *ancien regime* is overthrown by a popular insurrection. Instead, they more usually occur in contexts where existing power holders retain much of their control over the levers of power in society, property, the military and, not least, the state bureaucracy.

At the same time, they are unable easily to eradicate opposition. Transition begins when there is a mutually perceived sense of stalemate, the continuation of which becomes untenable:

"Protagonists agree to terminate conflicts...because they fear a continuation of conflict may lead to civil war that will be collectively and individually threatening. The pressure to stabilise the situation is tremendous since governance must somehow continue. Chaos is the worst alternative for all." (Przeworski 1991: 85)

Przeworski finds the solution to chaos in an alliance between reformers inside the authoritarian block and moderates in the pro-democracy opposition. Both distance themselves from extremists in their own camps: reformers from hardliners and moderates from radicals. Thus both seek a sub-optimal solution that will nonetheless allow themselves and their society to survive:

"Reformers face a strategic choice of remaining in an authoritarian alliance with hardliners, or seeking a democratic alliance with moderates. Moderates, in turn, can seek all out destruction of the political forces organised under the authoritarian regime by allying with radicals, or they can seek an accommodation by negotiating with reformers." (Przeworski 1991: 69)

This solution is encouraged by the threat of chaos implicit in continued stalemate or maximalist solutions:

"Political actors calculate that whatever difference in their welfare

not worth the risk inherent in continued conflict." (Przeworski 1991: 85)

Reformers and moderates find common cause in a limited, or shrunken, notion of democracy in which governments 'must be strong enough to govern effectively, but weak enough not to be able to govern against important interests'.

The elitist aspects of liberal democratic theory find new currency as the alliance of reformers and moderates commits itself to a form of politics that preserves the central pillars of capitalist society, ensuring that entrenched power holders - especially the *bourgeoisie* - maintain a veto over the pace, content and institutional form of the new democracy.

Hence Przeworski concludes that successful transitions require an arrangement which is 'inevitably conservative, economically and socially'. This is brought about through institutions of 'elite pacted democracy' which insulate the government from the broad mass of people by making politics the permanent business of a small number of specialised personnel.

Importantly, however, in such situations governments are confronted with two options in relation to social movements. They can either work to undermine them or they can work with them to garner support for their programme.

Where there are strong social movements, the first path can only be pursued at great risk, as it threatens to compromise the democratic character of the transition. Consequently, most governments attempt to draw in social movements through corporatist type arrangements on the assumption that these will demobilise and moderate popular movements.

South Africa's transition ✓

In applying this framework to an analysis of the transition to democracy in South Africa, we may usefully start from the mid-1980s, by which time the crisis of apartheid had produced an impasse between the white controlled state and the popular organisations of the oppressed mass of the population.

No longer could the apartheid state secure the conditions for capital accumulation that it had once so effectively done. While previously apartheid provided the material conditions for profitability, the

had come to engender a level of conflict in society that seriously jeopardised the future of capitalism in South Africa.

Indeed, a low intensity civil war had emerged in the townships, with large parts rendered ungovernable, operating as 'no go areas' for the security forces and virtually under the control of what were, effectively, embryonic institutions of people's power.

In the words of the United Democratic Front (UDF), the coordinating body which emerged in early 1983 and came to embody the exiled ANC in its enforced absence from above ground politics:

"Not only are we opposed to the present parliament because we are excluded, but because parliamentary type of representation in itself represents a limited and narrow idea of democracy....The rudimentary organs of people's power that have begun to emerge in South Africa...represent in many ways the beginnings of the kind of democracy we are striving for." (Quoted in Lodge 1994: 24)

Grassroots democratic pressures could no longer be suppressed through the tried and tested states of emergency that once seemed to work so effectively. The regime had run out of repressive options and increasingly lacked the will, if not the resources, to suppress conflicts occasioned by armed struggle and mass action by unions and civics.

The campaign to make the country ungovernable had stretched the resources of the state to a point where further repressive measures would have entailed costs that capital was increasingly unwilling to bear. Crucially, too, the global financial community had refused to 'roll over' the government's debt repayments and harsher sanctions had begun to take a toll.

However, for all that the government faced mounting difficulties in pursuing apartheid, so too did the ANC in seeking to dislodge it. Although it could claim massive popular support, the principal liberation movement failed in its bid to unilaterally seize power because, while disruptive, neither the armed struggle nor the campaign to make the country ungovernable neared a point where the state was likely to be overthrown.

Labour struggles too - for all that latterly they were spearheaded by Cosatu, a federation which proved strategically highly astute - had indicated

alone, albeit over non-workplace issues, is only exceptionally sufficient to topple governments. Even South Africa, which by then had one of the strongest labour movements in the developing world, was no exception.

The stalemate could only be broken when the major protagonists realised that their individual solutions to South Africa's crisis could not be imposed unilaterally on others and that a negotiated solution, with all sides involved, would be the only way to achieve some of their aims.

More specifically, the regime had to accept that the demise of apartheid entailed a new, non-racial democracy in which minority interests were guaranteed by a Bill of Rights rather than race specific legislation.

On the other hand, the pro-democracy forces had to accept that the end to the stalemate would not be achieved through armed struggle and that they too would have to enter the process of negotiating a new order that would leave key institutions of the old South Africa intact.

It was only when the stalemate was finally and mutually acknowledged, and when the military formations on both sides came to accept that they could not eliminate each other, that the main opposing parties to the conflict began to talk to each other.

Key actors began to sense the stalemate in the mid-1980s when tentative and exploratory talks between quasi-official intermediaries began both inside the country and abroad.

An important moment occurred when Kobie Coetzee, Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons, began discussions with imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela in 1986 (Sparks 1994). Initially, the talks made little headway because of the insistence by President PW Botha that Mandela publicly renounce armed struggle.

However, the emergence of FW De Klerk as President in 1989 allowed reformists to move decisively in the direction of a negotiated solution. In February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released unconditionally and the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) were unbanned.

Over the next 12 months the ANC, SACP and Cosatu forged a formal alliance that cautiously began to distance itself from the armed struggle and from more radical elements within their own ranks. In Przeworski's

Vanishing ideologies

Negotiations for a democratic alternative in South Africa began in earnest at precisely the moment when notions of alternative forms of democracy vanished.

The collapse of Stalinist societies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the bankruptcy of social democracy in Western Europe, had transformed the international climate, delegitimising radical notions of democracy and social change. This removed the apartheid regime's historic fear that the commandist version of democracy, long espoused by the SACP, would be imposed on the negotiating process.

It became imperative at this point that the ANC reassert its organisational and ideological hegemony over the radical and precocious grassroots social movements that emerged during the near insurrectionary period of the 1980s.

During the 1980s high expectations were generated of a 'revolutionary rupture' that would usher in an egalitarian society. It was a period of hope, when activists in the labour movement and the civics were *de facto* leaders in the internal democratic movement.

The first step in the process of demobilisation was the unceremonious disbanding of the UDF. While many of its activists joined the ANC, a large number withdrew from political activism and were lost to the movement.

At the same time, Cosatu's leadership was increasingly drawn into tripartite corporatist type arrangements such as the National Manpower Commission, the National Economic Forum and many other forums that emerged during the period.

Initially, Cosatu entered the negotiations with a perception of itself as an equal partner in the transition process. Indeed, it applied to participate in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa), which constituted the first round of formal negotiations after February 1990, in its own right.

The application was rejected on the grounds that Cosatu was not a political party or government, and it was informed that its interests would be represented by the UDF.

Subsequently, the three organisations entered a formal Tripartite Alliance for the purpose of ensuring that each of their positions were accommodated in negotiations: ostensibly each party to the Alliance had equal status. Cosatu entered into an electoral accord with the ANC on this understanding.

However, this was transformed during 1993 into participation in a broad based programme of national consensus, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Cosatu played a central role in the ANC's election campaign, and some 20 Cosatu members stood as ANC national candidates.

Two of its leading members - Alec Erwin, now deputy minister of finance, and minister without portfolio Jay Naidoo - were subsequently appointed to key ministerial posts in the new Government.

Transition theory limitations ✓

At first glance it appears as if South Africa was a textbook case of democratisation along the lines of transition theory. There was indeed a meeting of minds between moderates and reformers, and pro-democratic forces were prudent in the version of democracy they were willing to settle for.

In Przeworski's terms we have a parliamentary system based on an interim Constitution which effectively protects the interests of capital. In this sense, the system is economically and socially conservative.

But appearances can be deceptive. What transition theory neglects or downplays, and the South African case demonstrates, is the central role of social movements - of struggle - in shaping both the modalities and the outcomes of the transition process (Adler and Webster 1995: 76). This is our point of departure, and the rationale for our research.

Although widely recognised as key actors in the transition, remarkably little research has been done on the expectations unionised workers have of the corporatist trends already visible and their relationship to parliamentary democracy.

The central research question we were concerned with was whether the social movement character of the South African labour movement would be lost in the face of the new political dispensation, or whether its social

As indicated, the book is based on the findings of a nationwide survey conducted among organised workers, and on interviews with key officials in Cosatu and its affiliates. They allowed us to identify the persistence of a tradition of participatory democracy in the workplace and its transfer to the parliamentary arena.

More significantly, we suggest that there are growing signs of a 'democratic rupture' between trade union leaders drawn into corporatist type tripartite structures, and rank and file trade union members.

Further, in contrast to the 'hegemonic' notion that South Africa has become a parliamentary democracy in which the elected majority party has a 'relatively free hand to govern the country as it likes between elections, our respondents appeared to be committed to a different notion of democracy. They tended to view democracy as an ongoing process of decision making in which all people affected should be continuously and actively engaged.

The survey identified a tradition of participatory democracy among Cosatu members, whose elected leaders are expected to be accountable and report back to their members. Importantly, most were committed to the view that parliamentary democracy must be substantially the same and consist of elected members held regularly accountable to the citizens.

If the new Government fails to deliver, workers claimed they would resort to ongoing mass action to force the Government to live up to its electoral promises.

We argue that this - not a rightwing *coup d'etat* or demands for sovereign ethnic states - constitutes the greatest challenge facing the Government of National Unity: a challenge which could propel the Government towards redistributive policies by mobilising pressure from civil society, the community and the workplace.

The South African case holds open the possibility of a less conservative outcome than transition theory would suggest.



THE COSATU WORKER SURVEY: RESEARCH METHOD AND TECHNIQUES

Much has been written of the broad dynamics of South Africa's transition. However, little extensive empirical work has been done on the perceptions of key groupings in society towards the transition, other than the broadest opinion polls.

This study focused on Cosatu union members, looking in particular at their political attitudes, aspirations and strategic choices, but also at the composition of this leading segment of the contemporary union movement in South Africa.

The principal research technique employed was a survey, although a series of in depth interviews were also conducted among Cosatu officials.

The latter research strategy involved a semi-structured questionnaire administered to 20 Cosatu officials in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Gauteng.

This chapter describes general demographic trends regarding Cosatu's membership and, very briefly, some of the methods employed in the research. A more detailed outline of the research methods, describing their limits as well as their potential, can be obtained from the authors if so desired.

During the 1980s there was a heavy emphasis in many of the social sciences in South Africa on what may be loosely determined 'political economy', focusing on general trends concerning the state, key socio-political actors, resistance and change, as opposed to more directly empirically founded quantitative studies.

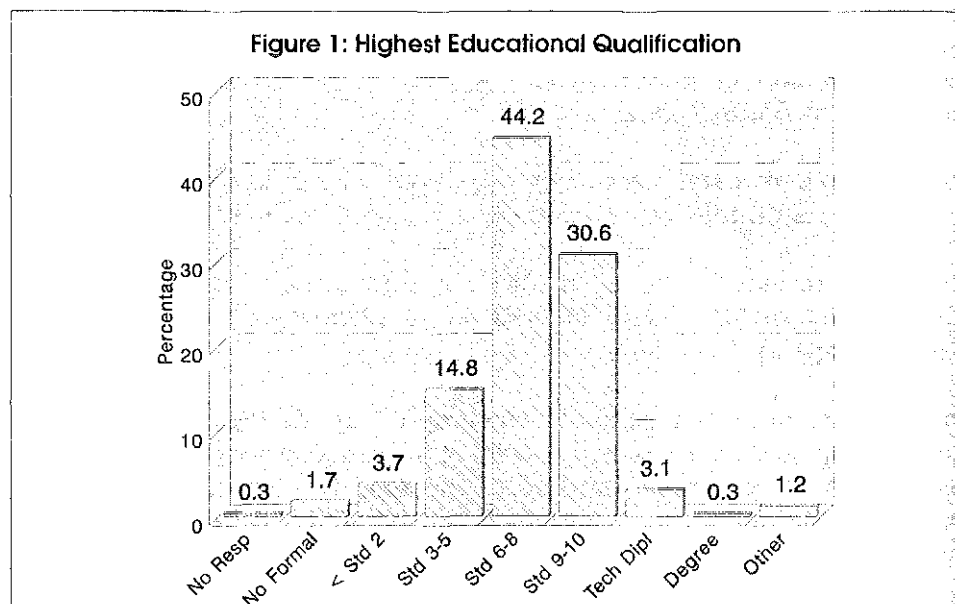
This research seeks, in a modest way, to redress something of this imbalance, not only by contributing to contemporary debates but also by demonstrating some of the possibilities of survey research in the

Most public opinion surveys in South Africa have been constrained by limitations in the sampling frames employed, as borne out by the inaccuracies in opinion polls conducted before the 1994 elections.

DEMOGRAPHIC PARTICULARS

Union regions and members

The study reached members of almost all the Cosatu unions. It encompassed most of the major unions, to provide an accurate reflection of the attitudes, values and perceptions of their members. All the major Cosatu regions were covered.

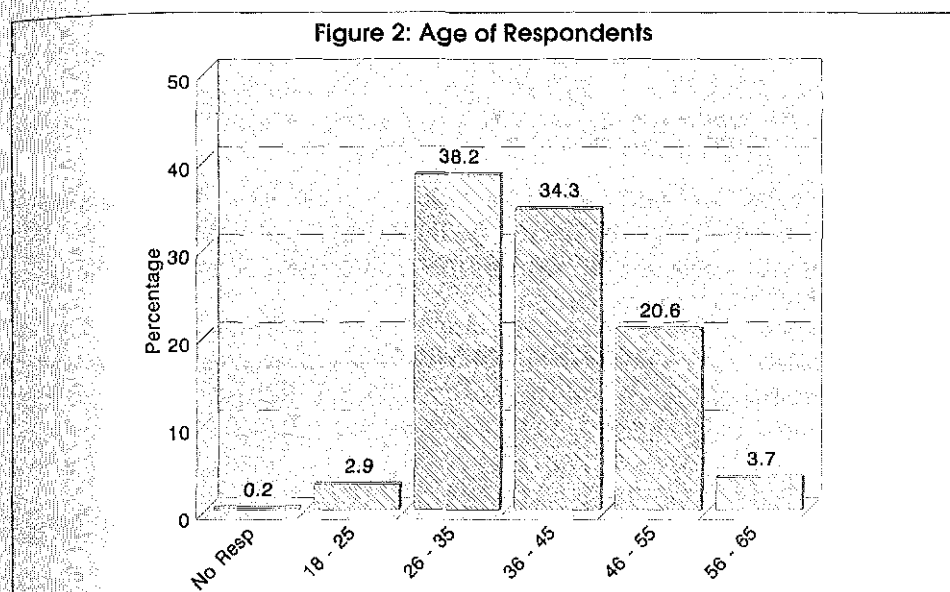


Although the sample encompassed trade unionists with a wide range of education levels, it is interesting to note that the overwhelming majority of Cosatu members had, at the very least, some degree of formal education and literacy (Figure 1).

It should be noted that Cosatu workers as a proportion of the labour market have better than average education levels. Most respondents

Ages and the labour market

Of considerably greater interest was the respondents' age levels. Most respondents were clustered in the 35 to 56 year band (Figure 2). This probably reflects greatly diminished employment opportunities over the last 15 years.



People in the formal economy would be less inclined to even temporarily leave their jobs, while those entering the labour market for the first time would be most unlikely to gain formal employment. This finding is particularly disturbing because it reflects the degree to which an entire generation have not been integrated into the formal economy and are probably condemned to remain 'outsiders' for the bulk of their working lives.

Experiences of unions

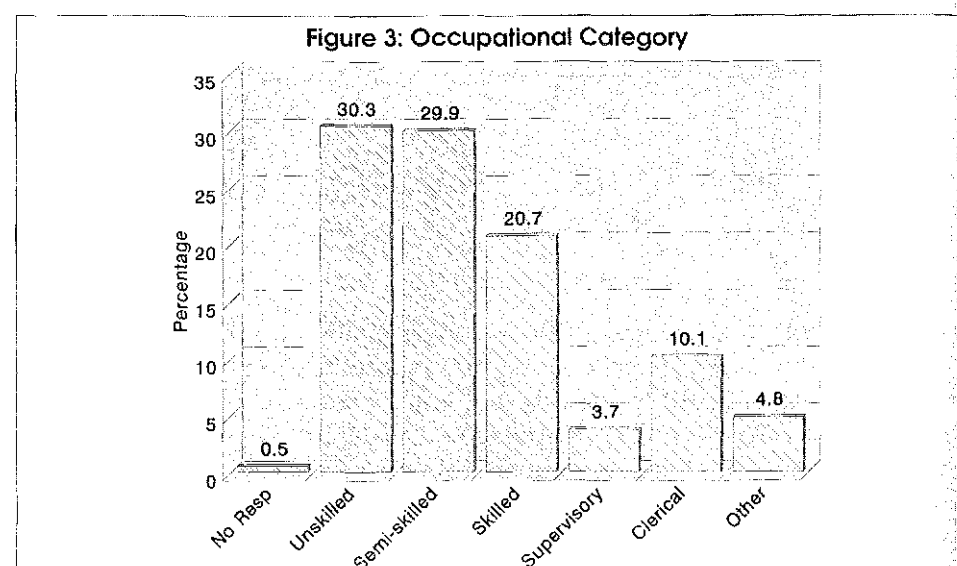
The average respondent first joined the independent unions in 1982. This average is somewhat skewed because a minority joined trade unions in the early 1970s - or even before. A small grouping of respondents belonged to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu), which

However, it seems that at least half of Cosatu's members belonged to a trade union prior to the federation's formation. While Cosatu has certainly expanded, it also represents a consolidation of an already well established union tradition and encompasses distinctive earlier traditions, such as those of Sactu.

Whatever their background, many respondents changed unions around the time of Cosatu's launch, reflecting realignments in the union movement prior to unity and the formation of industrial unions afterwards.

Skill and the union movement

Figure 3 reflects the skills levels of Cosatu members and, importantly, shows that the majority of Cosatu members are semi-skilled or skilled. This demonstrates a dramatic shift in the labour market and the changing nature of the union movement.



Hindson (1987: 98-100) noted that the apartheid labour market was segmented between pass bearing 'insiders' and 'illegal outsiders', in addition to earlier racial segmentations.

It is possible that this could have been replaced by a new form of segmentation, between semi-skilled and skilled, unionised 'insiders' and unskilled non-unionised 'outsiders'. The increasing skill content of members of the labour movement was noted by Webster (1991: 59) in

There is little doubt that in terms of security of tenure and wage levels - in addition to a privileged bargaining position - trade union members constitute a relatively privileged grouping.

It is also apparent that it was during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the independent unions rapidly expanded, that the skilling of the black labour force largely took place.

But the question arises as to whether the line of segmentation is on skill or the fact of union membership, the latter underlaid by the recruiting focus of the unions and the limits of trade union expansion.

In favour of the latter is that in sectors where unions are the strongest, they have been most successful in compressing the pay gap between semi-skilled and unskilled workers (Wood 1994: 191).

In other words, unions remain highly effective in representing the interests of members who are in a less favourable position. This distinction could overshadow earlier divisions over migrancy versus settled labour, especially as over time pure migrants tend to shift to semi-settled labour relations.

General trends

A number of demographic trends are apparent, reflecting the changing nature of the labour movement. Firstly, it is apparent that Cosatu encompasses a number of distinct traditions and types of trade unionism. This is more fully explored in the next chapter.

Secondly, it is evident that Cosatu's membership reflects fundamental shifts in the nature of the labour market. In particular, as mentioned, relatively few Cosatu members are recent entrants to the labour market, reflecting greatly diminished employment opportunities and the extent to which an entire generation has been marginalised.

It is also evident that most Cosatu members are at least semi-skilled. However, although union members do certainly constitute a more 'inside' segment of the labour market compared to the rural poor and the less formally employed, by no means should unions be seen as mere coalitions of the skilled (Wood 1994: 191).

They remain generally effective at pursuing the interests of all members.

THE RESEARCH METHOD

The survey

☐ Sampling procedure

The total sample size was 643 respondents. The sample size was computed after a pilot study had been conducted through simple quota sampling in the Durban region. The pilot study also helped formulate the final interview schedule and resulted in the elimination or modification of ambiguous or difficult to comprehend questions.

The final survey was conducted through probability sampling, through the area sampling method. Area sampling can involve systematic sampling, where each unit constitutes a collection of elements.

In systematic sampling, the final sampling frame is drawn up during the interviewing process, which enables a probability sample even where an accurate list of the population is not available or where individuals are difficult to trace - making it ideally suited to South Africa, where accurate records of populations are not always available.

Interviews were conducted at the workplace level, rather than in terms of selected individual respondent's names (Bailey 1987: 87-88).

The overall population was divided into a series of readily identifiable strata, defined in terms of Cosatu geographic regions. These regions constituted the Primary Sampling Unit. A Secondary Sampling Unit was made up of individual firms. Finally, fieldworkers were instructed to select respondents at each workplace systematically.

These elements, together with spread in residential centres, contributed to a representative sample of Cosatu members. The responses to most key questions dealing with perceptions proved remarkably homogeneous, which greatly facilitated in making the sample representative.

☐ The questionnaire

The questionnaire used mostly close ended questions, facilitating cross comparisons between individual responses, expediting coding and making for a consistent and straightforward interviewing process. Some open ended questions were also included.

detail where necessary, and certain response categories were collapsed to further simplify the interviewing process.

Most notably, instead of the conventional Likert scale of five responses, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, three response categories were employed in questions requiring some scale of responses - agree, neutral, and disagree. This greatly facilitated statistical analysis and enabled clarity in interpreting responses.

□ Operation

A few Cosatu unions do not have an orthodox shop floor structure and have a rather widely dispersed membership. It was not possible to include such unions because of time and cost constraints. Access problems precluded or restricted representation of two unions, but as there was very little difference in patterns of response, this did not seriously limit the study.

Individual firms were selected and clusters of firms were sampled in each region. The names of individual firms were selected through the normal (white pages) telephone directory. The list of firms was then narrowed down to those where a Cosatu affiliate had an organisational presence. Finally, individual firms were systematically selected.

Firms were contacted and arrangements made for conducting the interviews. Most willingly cooperated. Although heavy reliance on management for access could have resulted in workers being suspicious of the motives of the study, this did not generally seem to be the case. Many workers had been informed of the survey by their unions or shop stewards, and participated enthusiastically, and Cosatu National had given full support to the study.

Each region was placed under the direction of one or more of the authors of this book. Individual interviewers were then employed. After intensive training at regional level, interviewers were sent into the field, mostly in pairs. Where language difficulties were anticipated, interviewers fully conversant with the vernacular were used.

The original interview schedules were in English, which was employed wherever possible. The interview schedules were administered by interviewers, rather than questionnaires being completed by respondents, to assist those with literacy problems allow for flexibility and

After the interviews were conducted, interviewers were debriefed and their comments and observations collected. Finally, extensive cross checks with randomly selected firms and unions were conducted to ensure that the interviewing process had taken place in the desired manner. Most interviews seemed to capture the individual views of workers, although in a small minority of cases it seemed that a collective opinion was captured.

□ Data processing

The Department of Sociology at Rhodes University coded and processed the data. The use of mostly pre-coded close ended questions greatly facilitated the process. Union names and centres where the interviews were conducted were post coded. The data was then captured on computer.

Non-responses were coded as 0, which facilitated identification of questions with unusually high levels of non-response. The highest levels of non-responses were recorded in questions probing political allegiances.

Trained student research assistants entered the data, after which a comprehensive checking and cleaning process was conducted. Individual members of the research team were then supplied with comprehensive summary statistics and graphs.

□ Ethics and accountability

The anonymity of individual respondents and workplaces selected was rigorously observed. Only overall trends and relationships were analysed. The informed consent of individual respondents was sought prior to conducting the interviews. Respondents were assured that the findings would be made widely available, and that their union would be informed of the outcome of the research.

The interviews

A second research strategy involved a semi-structured questionnaire administered to 20 Cosatu officials. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information relating specifically to the impact of elections on the organisation and resources of Cosatu. A member of the research team, Sakhele Buhlungu, interviewed Cosatu officials in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Gauteng.



TRADE UNION DEMOCRACY

This chapter focuses on Cosatu workers' perceptions of and participation in trade union democracy. It provides some measures of the current state of shop floor democracy in the federation, levels of participation in union affairs and the relationship between participation and democracy.

But what is trade union democracy and how do workers arrive at their understanding of it?

To provide a framework for answering these questions, the chapter begins with an exposition of the historical development of trade union democracy in the country that gave birth to trade unionism - Britain.

The reasons why the British experience is chosen are because many Cosatu unions modelled their democracy on that which existed in British unions in the early 1970s, and because the exposition helps clarify concepts which are central to this book - direct democracy, oligarchy, participative democracy and shop floor or workplace democracy.

This is followed by an assessment of the development of democracy in some Cosatu unions, focusing particularly on the growth of a participatory shop floor democratic tradition in independent unions that emerged in the 1970s. The rapid growth of unions in the 1980s, and resulting organisational problems they experienced in the early 1990s, are then presented.

This information provides a key to understanding Cosatu workers' approach to trade union democracy and their knowledge - or lack of knowledge - of their unions' activities and involvement in broader national economic and political issues.

After providing a broad historical canvas, the results of the survey regarding members' perception and practice of shop floor democracy are discussed in considerable detail. Particular attention is paid to regional and intra-union variations, followed by an assessment of the durability of union democracy in the face of pressures towards institutionalisation and bureaucratisation.

A DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

Development of union democracy

Sidney and Beatrice Webb examined the development of democracy in British trade unions from their origins up to the early 20th Century. Their ideas are encapsulated in the landmark work, *Industrial Democracy*, published in 1897.

The Webbs called the first stage of trade union democracy to have emerged 'primitive democracy'. It had taken place in local trade clubs of the 18th Century and was a form of direct participatory democracy.

Members strived to conduct business at general meetings and were imbued with the principle of 'what concerns all should be decided by all' (Webb 1911: 8). The president was often only chosen for a particular meeting, and the next most important officers were usually chosen by rotation. The early 'trade clubs' were thus organisations in which all members participated without an established hierarchy of officials.

When local unions started federating into national unions between 1824 and 1840 it was no longer possible for unions to practice direct democracy. On account of their regional dispersion it became necessary for national unions to elect full-time secretaries.

But the process of centralisation and bureaucratisation took place slowly, with considerable resistance from below (Hyman 1975: 7). This led to moves to preserve the supreme authority of members by means of a referendum which granted any section of the union the right 'to insist on its proposals being submitted to the vote of the whole electorate' (Webb 1911: 21).

As it happened, the referendum had the opposite effect of what was intended. Instead of members retaining a real say in the affairs of the union, control became increasingly centralised and enabled the development of oligarchic rule by officials and the executive because:

"The right of putting questions to the vote came practically to be confined to the executive...Any change which the executive desired could be stated in the most plausible terms and supported by convincing arguments, which almost invariably secured its adoption by a large majority." (Webb 1911: 26)

Towards the last decade of the 19th Century, after about a century of organisational experience, oligarchy - domination by a few officials - had become prevalent in the British trade union movement.

This, the Webbs maintained, was because of the attempt to retain direct participatory democracy in national organisations (Webb 1911: 36). Hyman (1975: 71) adds that unions which had open membership policies soon experienced internal divisions and conflicts of interest, necessitating strong leadership direction.

The more advanced trade unions had, however, become aware of the existence and causes of oligarchy. Their constitutions therefore underwent a 'silent revolution' after 1889 to emerge with a representative form of democracy. In the opinion of the Webbs this was successful in solving 'the fundamental problem of democracy, the combination of administrative efficiency and popular control' (Webb 1911: 38).

The central feature of the system of representative democracy was electing an assembly of representatives as the supreme body in the union. It also appointed an executive committee which governed the union between conferences of the assembly.

To obtain a balance between workers' aspirations and efficient administration, unions made provision for representation of both workers and officials on their assemblies and executive committees.

For example, the executive committee of the Cotton Operatives consisted of three office bearers as well as 13 additional members, seven of whom had to be working spinners while the remaining six were permanent officials (Webb 1911: 39).

Although officials still tended to dominate at assembly conferences, worker representatives frequently intervened 'with effect' in the procedures (Webb 1911: 44).

This form of worker participation, however, only took place at the level of the supreme representative assembly, not the shop floor. It not only limited the potential for trade union democracy through rank and file participation, but also opened the way for oligarchic tendencies to reassert themselves in unions.

The way these oligarchic tendencies were overcome in British trade unions was through the emergence of a strong shop stewards movement.

stewards initially had the task of protecting their craft from job dilution, but the scope of their activities was widened to workplace negotiation at the end of the 19th Century (Clegg 1979: 21).

Soon they assumed the role of representing workers in all dealings with management on matters of pay and working conditions, and assisting workers in voicing their personal grievances (Torrington 1972: 603).

After briefly emerging during World War I, shop stewards came to the fore in industrial relations in Britain in the 1960s as they shifted the emphasis of negotiation to workplace bargaining. The drive was provided by the rise in rank and file strength and militancy (Lane 1974: 162).

In the upsurge of workplace bargaining the shop stewards' role was no longer one of protecting a craft, but negotiating directly with management on the shop floor over wages and a wide range of working conditions.

This included health and safety, dismissal and other disciplinary actions, as well as negotiating the introduction of new machinery and jobs (Clegg 1979: 24).

The upsurge in autonomous workplace bargaining under the leadership of shop stewards made an impact on trade union organisation as well. The most significant change was the incorporation of shop stewards into union structures.

By impelling themselves onto various bodies of unions, shop stewards did much to restore democratic practices in unions once again. Decision making in unions shifted towards the shop floor as pressure could be brought to bear from shop stewards who had autonomous power bases in the workplace (Clegg 1979: 220).

Although much more could be added about the historical and contemporary struggle to establish and maintain democracy in trade unions, enough has been said to provide some conclusions based on the British experience (Maree 1986: 33-53).

The first is that efforts by national unions to maintain direct participatory democracy resulted in oligarchy. The second is that the introduction of representative democracy in unions' assemblies and executives did a great deal to restore democracy to unions. The third is that the emergence of a strong shop stewards movement in the 1960s introduced participatory shop floor democracy to unions.

Participatory democracy in Cosatu

The origins of participatory democracy in Cosatu can be traced to unions that emerged in South Africa at the time of the Durban strikes in 1973. Almost from the outset these unions were committed to creating participatory shop floor democracy in their structures.

Independent unions which emerged in the 1970s and which concentrated on participatory workplace organisation were the then Natal and Transvaal unions belonging to the Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council (Tuacc) and the Western Province General Workers Union (WPGWU) in Cape Town, which subsequently became the General Workers Union (GWU).

The Tuacc unions merged with other independent unions in 1979 to form the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu). In 1985 Fosatu, the GWU and numerous other unions committed to non-racism founded Cosatu.

A key influence in these unions were intellectuals based at the liberal universities of Natal, the Witwatersrand and Cape Town. They were moved by the upsurge of the shop steward movement in British trade unions in the 1960s as well as the strong surge for participatory democracy that followed in the wake of the 1968 student and worker revolts in France and other European countries.

Workers, for their part, threw themselves with zest into the task of building factory committees comprising worker representatives. In due course the committees became shop steward committees comprising elected shop stewards (Maree 1986).

In practice the strategy of workplace organisation was implemented in different ways by distinct union groupings. The Tuacc unions in Natal commenced with mass recruitment as workers poured into unions after the Durban strikes. When the weakness of this organisational strategy dawned on organisers during 1974 and 1975 the unions switched to in-depth workplace organisation.

Shop stewards were given the key tasks of recruiting and organising workers, collecting subscriptions, canvassing worker positions on issues and taking them up with management. To do so, they had to meet regularly, usually weekly, as committees where they also received training

By contrast, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (Mawu) branch of Tuacc in Johannesburg engaged in intensive workplace organisation right from the outset. At Heinemann Electric, the union's best organised factory, as many as three weekly meetings were being held during the intensive struggle for recognition by the union.

The tradition continued after the union lost the Heinemann dispute: shop stewards' meetings of all factories being organised were held weekly and more frequently when there was a dispute taking place.

The WPGWU also emphasised workplace organisation, although it organised works committees rather than shop stewards' committees. In effect there was no difference as the works committees consisted of elected worker representatives.

From the outset regular weekly meetings were held with works committees from organised plants. Monthly general meetings of rank and file members from each enterprise were also held. The union gradually developed a principle that worker representatives rather than officials should negotiate with management, to ensure the representativeness and accountability of negotiators.

The above account shows that the foundations of workplace participatory democracy were firmly laid in independent unions that emerged during the 1970s and subsequently became affiliates of Cosatu.

Representative democracy also developed in unions during this period. Already in the late 1970s unions were struggling to ensure that democracy was truly representative. An example from Tuacc in Natal illustrates how unions tried to ensure the representativeness of their democratic structures.

Implementing representative democracy

The commitment of intellectuals in the movement to democracy led them to construct Tuacc in a way that built worker control formally into the organisation. Tuacc consisted of a council and secretariat: the council was composed of the full branch executive committees of unions affiliated to it.

The secretariat comprised two representatives nominated by each affiliated union, only one of whom could be a paid official. Furthermore, under

the Tuacc constitution only trade union representatives had voting rights on the council and secretariat. The principle of worker representative majorities was thus built into both the council and secretariat.

Although a democratic structure with worker majorities was created, ensuring the representativeness of the union representatives on Tuacc was a basic problem. The minutes of the first Tuacc secretariat meeting on June 23, 1975, reflected concerns about the danger of secretariat members not representing the interests of their constituents.

Representatives were encouraged to report back to their branch executive committees and union or local staff meetings. They were also reminded that, since they did not attend the meeting as individuals they were only entitled to put forward the arguments of their union, not their own point of view.

This turned out to be a vain hope. Four years later, in 1979, the secretary's report to the Natal Regional Council noted that:

"The functioning of the secretariat remains a matter of concern. There is a need for all members of the secretariat to improve the extent to which they express the position of those they represent rather than simply their own viewpoint."

By that stage the Mawu branch had taken steps to overcome the problem. The Mawu branch executive committee submitted specific resolutions to the secretariat rather than leaving it up to Mawu representatives to put forward the union's position.

It is clear that the form of democracy being established in unions was both participatory and representative.

The democratic ethic

The foundations of Cosatu workers' understanding of trade union democracy were laid during the 1970s. But it was not only a set of democratic practices and structures that were entrenched; a democratic ethic was also implanted in union members.

What the unions were trying to achieve in the 1970s and what lay behind the thinking of intellectuals was well expressed in an interview in 1979 with Alec Erwin - now Deputy Minister of Finance - who became secretary

of Tuacc in 1977 and, after that, the first general secretary of Fosatu. In his words:

"It seems to me there are, broadly speaking, two conceptions of democracy. One I would style a radical liberal conception which is that everyone must have his say and be allowed to vote. And within those people someone must be a leader.

"I think that kind of democracy is actually open to disguised power manipulation and control because every man speaking will not change basic structures or institutions in society. We'd say you must have resilient structures that can hold people accountable in a real sense.

"So the alternate conception of democracy is a much more structured view: that people must be able to control what is possible to control. We must establish more definite structures of accountability.

"So what we were trying to build in Tuacc, and are presently trying to achieve in Fosatu, is that the democratic structure must be through a process of the factory controlling the shop steward because that man the worker sees every day in the plant: his access to him is far greater.

"Then the shop steward sits on the branch executive committee and the report back system is structured and definite. If I could contrast this, say, to a branch executive committee that is elected at an annual general meeting. There is no clear structure of systematic accountability there. So we've been trying in Tuacc to build that structure up from shop steward to branch executive committee to Tuacc.

"Now that is a very much slower process because structures in themselves never create democracy. Only aware leadership and membership create democracy.

"So once having built shop stewards you then have to make them effective shop stewards. If they are effective their membership is going to be more informed, conscious and interested in knowing what they are doing. And likewise good shop stewards will make a good branch executive committee, and a good branch executive committee a good national executive committee."

Erwin's evaluation of the extent to which intellectuals in Tuacc had succeeded in creating democratic trade unions by 1979 flowed from the form of democracy they were pursuing:

"Now it does mean that the conceivers of democratic structures, the intellectual leadership, will be more dominant in the initial period. While there is no doubt that a few of us have been very important and dominant and we pushed and bulldozed to some extent, I think that the practices and lines we've established are democratic and resilient.

"I think we built up branch executive committees and shop stewards who can decide for themselves, who are effective in their own plants. The more successful they are the more that leadership will become powerful and effective. Now working on that conception of democracy will take more time.

"I would say in Tuacc, while we (the intellectuals) might be powerful there's no possibility that we could massively abuse the power structures. It is just because certain ethics have been established which cannot be broken at this point no matter how dominant the intellectual might be.

"We have more resilient checks against our power than whatever had been achieved by the liberal democratic conception of democracy. I don't deny that we might have a lot of power and influence, but equally it is nonsense to say that workers must just democratically rise up.

"To my mind the one thing that the Tuacc experience did create was its conception that workers' control as an ethic is crucial and that the branch executive committee is more important than the organiser. I do believe we've got that.

"We haven't as yet got a capacity for the branch executive committee to effectively dominate the organiser, but the ethic that it should do is firmly implanted and not challengeable. So I think an organiser can't step too far outside that. If he does he's gone."

The account so far has outlined the historical development of trade union democracy in Britain and the way in which it was practised in South Africa by independent unions that emerged during the 1970s and subsequently became affiliates of Cusasa.

In the next section the rapid growth during the 1980s of independent unions, particularly Cosatu, is presented. The organisational consequences for Cosatu of rapid growth are also examined.

UNION GROWTH IN THE 1980s

Rapid growth

After the state 'legitimised' African trade unions in 1979 by granting them official recognition, independent unions grew rapidly in the 1980s. The trend continued, although at a decelerating rate, into the 1990s.

Total trade union membership from 1979 to 1991 increased almost fourfold from 700 000 to 2,7 million with trade union density - the proportion of the labour force unionised - in the non-agricultural sector rising from 15% to 53% (Macun 1993: 49). More specifically, membership of independent, mainly African unions shot up in the first four years after 1979 from 70 000 to 300 000.

Unions made most headway with formal recognition: whereas there were only five recognition agreements at the end of 1979 there were no less than 406 by the end of 1983. Fosatu accounted for 70% of the agreements (Maree 1985: 297).

Cosatu also made very rapid headway. At the time of its formation in November 1985 it had 462 000 members: by the end of 1991 its membership had increased almost threefold to 1,26 million.

Three quarters of its members in 1991 were concentrated in the manufacturing and mining industries. It was in the manufacturing sector that Cosatu's membership started levelling off in the 1990s. On the other hand, public sector unions in Cosatu started growing rapidly in the 1990s (Macun 1993: 49-50).

There appear to be three major reasons for the rapid growth of independent unions in the 1980s. The first was because of the changed political climate brought about by the state's 'legalisation' of African trade unions. Secondly, sound workplace organisation in the form of shop steward structures combined with good local and national leadership was a key factor in unions' growth. Finally, economic conditions, especially inflation,

spurred workers to join unions in order to protect their real wages (Macun 1993: 51-52).

Organisational consequences

The rapid growth of unions in the 1980s meant that they grew large - in some cases extremely large - with their organisation extending to the national level.

Negotiations became more centralised and issues dealt with more complex. The structures of unions became more complex, with regional and national executive committees coming on top of branch executive committees.

The organisational structure of Cosatu also became more complex. As union densities increased, local shop stewards councils emerged in different localities, with shop stewards from all the unions operating in the localities required to attend the meetings.

As the unions and Cosatu grew in strength they exercised their political and strategic muscle by forcing their way onto statutory institutions such as the National Manpower Commission and National Training Board.

They also took the initiative in creating forums on which they could influence economic and industrial policy. The National Economic Forum was the most significant and was only established after a hard struggle by organised labour.

The implications of these developments for trade union democracy was that rank and file members as well as shop stewards became increasingly distanced from the central issues which unions were contesting in the 1990s. The issues being dealt with also became so complex that it was beyond the capacity of shop stewards to grasp and debate them.

As a result agendas of local shop stewards' council meetings became dominated by issues that came from 'head office'. The complexity of the issues meant that, far from generating vibrant debates and giving mandates for national action, local meetings often turned into long briefing sessions (Marie 1992: 22).

Besides the lack of shop steward expertise, a problem lay in the Cosatu practice of discussing every issue in every structure. Ironically, the practice had the opposite effect of the intended worker control. Instead, it created conditions for the development of a bureaucracy.

Consequently, attendance at local meetings declined. In 1992 around 100 out of a possible 500 shop stewards turned up at Cosatu's Durban local whereas in the Johannesburg local only about 100 of a potential 1 000 shop stewards attended regularly (Keet 1992: 35).

The hierarchical growth of Cosatu unions also placed strain on representatives within unions. Effective shop stewards who made it onto national executive committees were also on their regional and branch committees.

As an observer noted, for a shop steward to be effective it would have been 'advantageous to attend the whole sequence of meetings upwards', but for a shop steward to be diligent could require 'attending after work meetings every night of the week, and over the weekend' (Keet 1992: 32).

These structural problems in Cosatu and its affiliates implied that worker control could no longer be practised effectively in the 1990s. However, an even more basic problem that emerged was a breakdown in communication within unions, both from the bottom up and from the top down. The implication was that rank and file members of unions were no longer aware of what their leaders did at national level.

Research conducted in this survey highlighted these issues. In particular it tested the extent to which union democracy was still operating in the workplace. It also evaluated the extent to which members were in touch with their unions' corporatist practices at the national level - a theme which is examined extensively in the next chapter.

UNION DEMOCRACY IN THE WORKPLACE

Union membership

From modest beginnings, unions belonging to Sactu enjoyed growth in the late 1950s, with membership peaking at 53 000 in 1961. Thereafter, following the banning of the ANC, union membership declined and Sactu removed itself into exile.

Black unions emerged again as a significant force in the 1970s and, in the early years, struggled for survival. But as Figure 4 demonstrates, the overwhelming majority of respondents in our survey joined a union

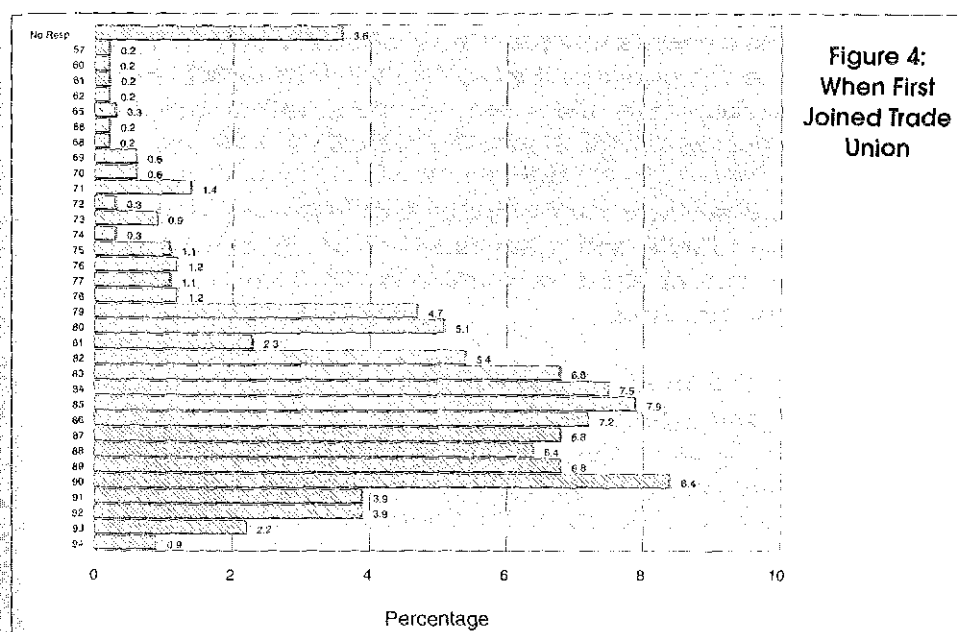


Figure 4:
When First
Joined Trade
Union

for the first time during the 1980s and in 1990, after which the rate of joining tapered off.

This corresponds with the rapid growth of black trade unions during the 1980s in the wake of the 1979 Wiehahn reforms in labour relations, which heralded state recognition of African trade unions for the first time in the country's history.

Most respondents had therefore been members of a trade for four to 14 years, with the median falling in 1985 and most workers having belonged to unions for nine years.

A large proportion of the sample was drawn from members of former Fosatu unions and other unions that emphasised participative shop floor democracy - the 'workerist' unions - the most important exceptions being workers formerly belonging to the South African Allied Workers Union (Saawu) and the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu).

Saawu disbanded when Cosatu was established, its membership being divided between umbrella industrial unions, often centred around former Fosatu affiliates. Although there have been some recorded instances of tensions between former Fosatu and Saawu members - most notably a dispute at Mercedes Benz in 1990 (Von Holdt 1990:15-26) - this process of absorption was generally successful.

Unfortunately the survey did not cover many of the most recently unionised workers: those in the public sector, especially in the former homelands. Public sector workers enter the union movement with a rather different body of experience to other categories of workers.

Also, public sector workers are less likely to have had any direct previous experience of the limits and possibilities of union organisation. It is uncertain what impact these new unionists will have on established union democratic practices.

Traditionally, the bulk of Cosatu's members have been in the manufacturing and mining sectors. For reasons beyond our control, members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) were somewhat under represented in our sample. This is unfortunate, not least because NUM was founded in 1982 under the Council of Unions of South Africa (Cusa), which stressed the importance of black leadership.

NUM abandoned this creed in favour of non-racialism when it became a founding affiliate of Cosatu, but it would have been interesting to observe more closely whether it manifested any particular democratic features reflecting its Cusa background.

However, based on the limited number of interviews with miners which we were able to conduct, it does not seem that there were major differences between their attitudes and values and those of workers in the manufacturing sector.

Shop steward structures

Almost all respondents - 99 % - reported functional shop steward structures at their workplace. This shows that Cosatu has successfully maintained the tradition of shop floor organisation.

It should be noted that such organisation promotes multi-layered leadership, which is particularly important since the upper echelons of the union movement have been siphoned off into Parliament and other state structures. As was apparent when the state banned 24 trade union activists in November 1976, the sudden removal of key leaders can severely damage union organisation (Friedman 1987: 119-121).

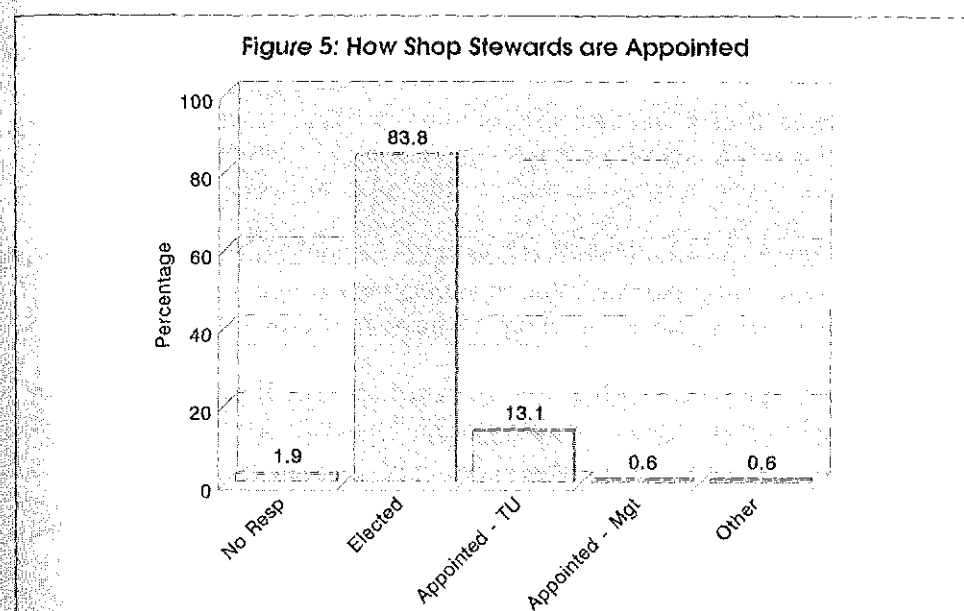
Shop floor organisation also forms an important grassroots counterbalance to industry wide deals. However, there are indications that some shop

floor leaders are being targeted by management for promotion, as a means of fulfilling affirmative action objectives.

So while functional shop floor structures have a particularly important role at present because of the trends towards centralised bargaining and loss of key national leaders to government, it should not be assumed that shop floor structures are immune to similar pressures towards incorporation and accommodation.

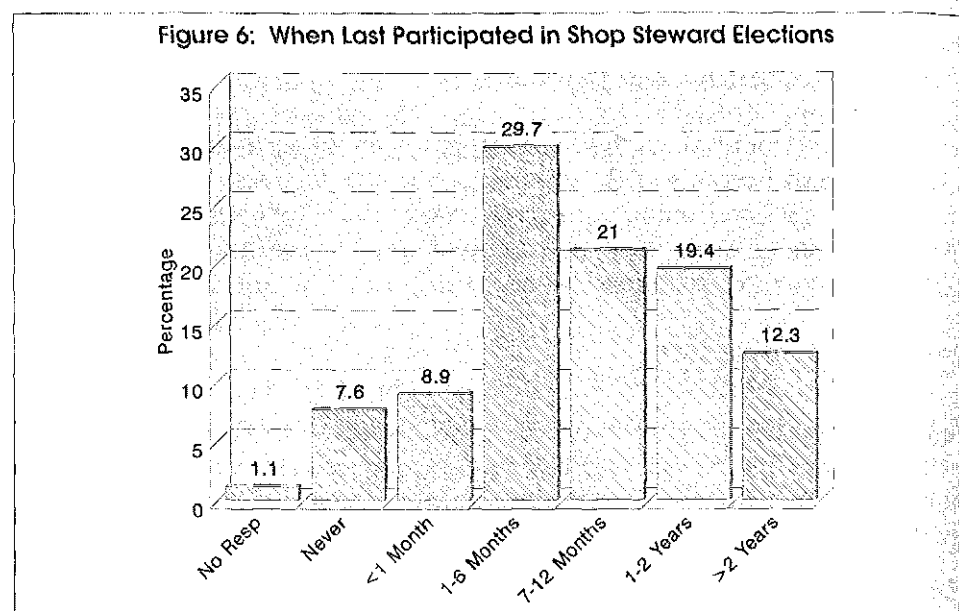
Democratic practices

Eighty four percent of shop stewards were elected and 13% were appointed by the union (Figure 5). The high proportion of elected shop stewards demonstrates a high level of representative democracy being practised on the shop floor.



The small proportion who were appointed by unions could reflect undemocratic practices or early stages of factory organisation, when unions often initially appoint shop stewards to help in recruitment drives and other basic organisational activities.

Nearly 60% of respondents had elected their shop stewards within the preceding 12 months, but 12% had only done so more than two years previously and 8% had never done so (Figure 6)



While it seems that a democratic tradition in shop floor structures has persisted, there is a definite component of Cosatu members - 20% - who have had little recent involvement in this area of union life.

Statistical tests revealed that there was some relationship between geographic region and participation in shop steward elections, with Western Cape workers being the least likely to have participated.

Further analysis revealed a highly significant, although somewhat weaker, relationship between union membership and participation in shop steward elections.

South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (Sactwu) members were least likely to have participated, followed by Samwu and South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (Saccawu) members. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of Cosatu workers regularly participated in this aspect of union affairs.

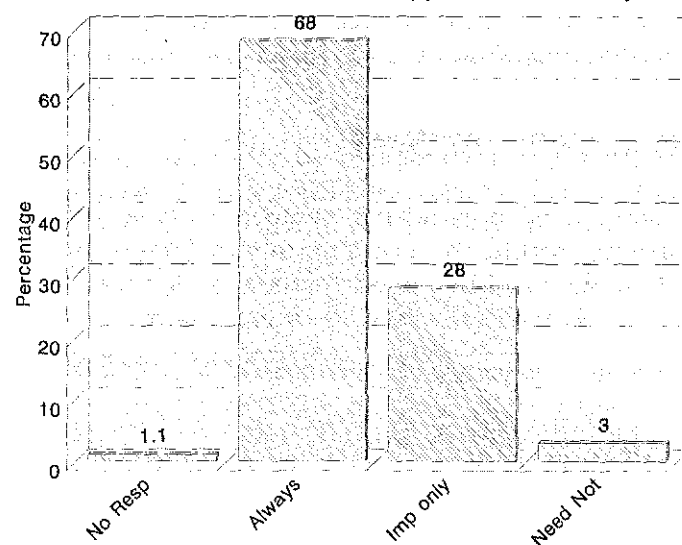
Slightly more than half of shop stewards were elected by secret ballot, with most of the remainder elected by show of hands.

Thus, at least half Cosatu's members are familiar with the procedures of voting by secret ballot, representing a firm basis for democratic participation politically and in the workplace.

Mandates and accountability

When electing shop stewards, 99% of respondents believed they had given them a specific mandate to carry out directions from the shop floor, rather than a completely open ended brief. More than two thirds also felt political parties should consult supporters over decisions that would affect them (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Political Parties Must Consult their Supporters When they make Decisions



However, a third in the case of shop stewards and 28% in the case of politicians believed this was only necessary as far as important issues were concerned. In other words, most saw shop stewards and politicians as having rather narrowly defined mandates.

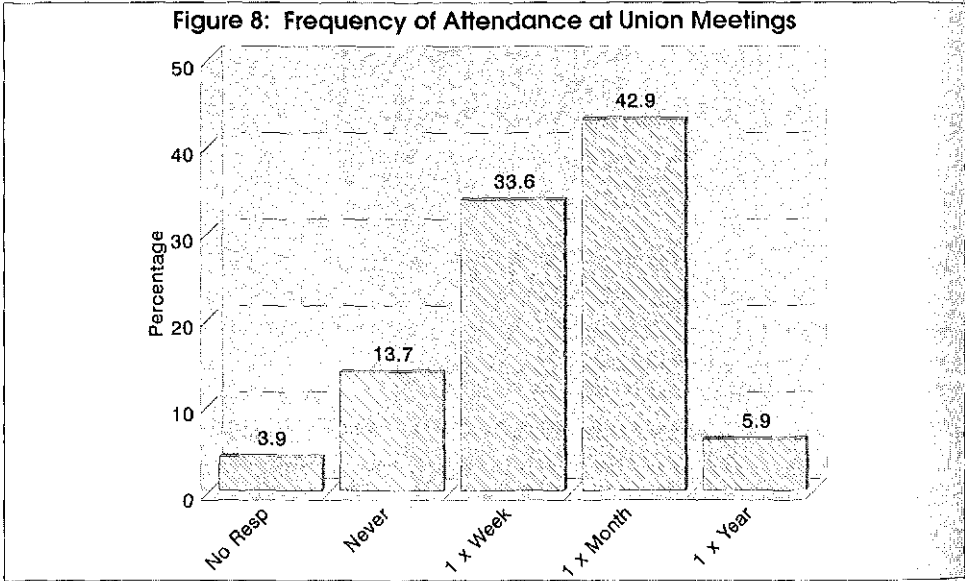
Most Cosatu workers also believed in strictly defined notions of accountability: 77% believed shop stewards were expected to report back to workers every time they acted on behalf of workers. Should they not do so, almost all who responded to the question said workers should have the right to dismiss shop stewards.

Even so, almost a third of respondents had experience of shop stewards being dismissed at their current place of employment (Table 1). The reasons for the dismissals are not known, but whatever they were the results demonstrate that workers do apply their power to dismiss shop floor representatives deemed not to be acting in their interests.

Table 1: Dismissing Shop Stewards			
	Yes	No	No Response
If a shop steward does not represent workers, they have a right to dismiss her/him.	94%	5%	1%
Has a shop steward ever been dismissed by workers at your workplace?	31%	68%	1%

Attendance at union meetings

Seventy six percent of respondents claimed to have attended at least one union meeting within the previous month (Figure 8). On the other hand, more than one in 10 had never attended union meetings, indicating that they are not formally involved in union affairs.



Perhaps, as Pateman (1970: 83) suggests, there may be a link between the types of decisions made and the degree of participation. In other words, there may be a greater willingness to participate in decision making if issues covered are of more immediate concern to workers. The extent of democratic participation may therefore be affected by whether a union

has its primary focus on day to day shop floor issues, or on national level policy concerns.

As was suggested by the relatively low level of participation in shop steward elections, it was in the Western Cape that workers were least likely to attend union meetings. Meeting attendance was lowest among Saccawu, Construction and Allied Workers Union (Cawu) and Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) members.

Against this must be considered the large deviation in responses among CWIU members, with 52% attending meetings on a weekly basis. Even among Saccawu and Cawu members a sizeable grouping went to union meetings regularly.

Consequently, there seems to be a high level of participation in union affairs among almost all Cosatu affiliates, again indicating that the internal democracy characteristic of many of the early independent unions has successfully been preserved.

Participation and democracy

Participation in union meetings was compared with the method of acquiring shop stewards: whether the shop stewards were elected by members or appointed by the union. This is particularly important since it reflects the relationship between participation and democracy in the union movement.

There was a statistically significant relationship between the two: in workplaces where there was a high level of attendance, there were also likely to be democratically elected shop stewards. In other words, high levels of participation resulted in high levels of union democracy.

It is possible that the relationship between the two variables is a two way one. Workers would be more motivated to participate in union structures should democratic practices be the norm, and when it was possible for them to have a real impact on union structures. Similarly, high levels of attendance at union meetings would make it easier to call shop stewards to account and would greatly facilitate the holding of regular elections.

Most workers surveyed reported high levels of shop floor democracy. Unions seem indeed fortunate in being in a high participation-high

democracy cycle. New recruits socialised into such an environment would ultimately contribute to its reinforcement. However, the democracy-participation cycle could be vulnerable to external pressures, such as the need for engagement in wider socio-political issues.

Length of union membership

An important question is whether continuing internal democracy is associated with recent unionisation. Our analysis of attendance at union meetings, by the length of time individuals had been members of the union movement, revealed that there was no link between the two.

However, there was a relationship between workers' attendance at union meetings and length of time they had been members of their current union. It did seem to be the case that workers who joined their current union in the late 1980s or early 1990s were more likely to participate in union affairs.

Nonetheless, the most long standing union members still took part in union affairs on a regular basis. Thus while high levels of participation in union affairs were not confined to those who had most recently joined the union movement, those who had been members of the same union for a relatively long time were somewhat less likely to attend union meetings.

Tendency towards a democratic culture

The formation of Cosatu brought together a number of diverse traditions of unionism. The process of union unity in fact represented a number of coalitions - between unions with different approaches to organisation, between different categories of workers, and between political and workplace activists.

Firstly, as noted, it seems that certain unions are marked by lower levels of democratic participation than others. Nevertheless, a general tendency seems to have been towards a common democratic culture. In view of the high levels of democratic participation encountered in almost all unions, it seems that it was the participative tradition that dominated during the unification and consolidation of the union movement.

This confirms Erwin's perception that a democratic ethic was established in Fosatu unions and that the expectation existed among workers that

unions ought to be democratic. As Pateman (1990: 104) noted, 'we learn to participate by participating'.

In other words, participation in democratic structures is a self reinforcing phenomenon. People socialised in a participative environment are more likely to actively participate in the future (Pateman 1990: 105). This largely explains the endurance of union shop floor democracy in many cases two decades after its inception.

Challenges facing union democracy

As Arendt (1965: 218) noted, an initial wave of grassroots collective action, although founded on democratic practices, does not always ensure lasting accountability and representivity - a phenomenon most evident in the Webbs' (1911: 8-26) study of British trade unions.

Organisations dedicated to change tend to have high levels of democratic commitment and practice at their inception.

But fairly soon this commitment becomes subsumed by the desire to ensure organisational stability and continuity (Arendt 1965: 219), which can inhibit both internal democracy and the capacity to effectively engage in future collective action.

The democracy versus efficiency dilemma is one of the major tensions facing independent unions today. Unlike earlier attempts at mass unionisation in South Africa, the independent unions succeeded in consolidating early gains and survived periodic bouts of state repression.

Despite the fact that early shop floor democracy has persisted, questions emerge over the relationship between union leaders and their constituencies and the possibility of bureaucratisation.

Many workers have had experience of shop stewards being dismissed because they failed to carry out workers' wishes. But it is unclear how far this direct accountability has extended up union structures.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, shop floor democracy has survived a gradual process of institutionalisation. But it is evident that a second face of unionism has emerged: that of a national level socio-political actor entering into coalitions with other key actors at state level.



WORKERS AND PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

Following its launch in 1985, Cosatu played a key role in the struggle to end apartheid and create a new democracy in South Africa.

In particular, there were two periods when Cosatu effectively assumed the leadership of the struggle at the popular level: during the heavy state repression of the late 1980s, when the ANC and SACP were still banned and the UDF was heavily restricted; and during the transition from 1990 when the unbanned liberation movements confronted immense organisational difficulties.

Its various mass action campaigns - the 1986 stayaways commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising, against deaths in detention, and against the repressive intent of the Labour Relations Amendment Act of 1988 and other issues - did much to convince national and international capital, and the South African and Western governments, that apartheid generated more conflict than it did profits.

Few can doubt that the upsurge of strikes, stayaways, consumer boycotts and marches, designed to exact economic and political concessions from both capital and the state, raised the costs of continuing to politically exclude the black majority to levels unacceptable to those who had until then benefited so handsomely from the legalised entrenchment of white minority power.

This in no way suggests that Cosatu alone was responsible for sealing the fate of the old order. The ANC's bid to isolate South Africa and the launch of its armed struggle predated the formation of Cosatu by decades.

The white regime's confidence was severely shaken by the Soweto unrest: the rise of the UDF in the early 1980s constituted a revival of a mass based challenge, and the ANC's associated campaign to render South Africa ungovernable melded with changing domestic and international circumstances to eventually bring Pretoria to recognise the inevitability of change.

Cosatu emerged as a conscious political actor allied to the UDF in the mid-1980s and at the helm of the Mass Democratic Movement in the late 1980s. In April 1990, when Cosatu entered into a formal alliance with the ANC and SACP to push for a final victory over apartheid, it did so as the one partner which at that time possessed a disciplined, tried and tested mass organisation on the ground.

The combined efforts of the liberation forces finally bore fruit. Towards the end of 1993, after protracted negotiations between the ruling National Party, the ANC and numerous other players, an Interim Constitution was agreed by all organisations except the far white right and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

In terms of the agreement, a Government of National Unity would govern for five years and a new parliamentary democratic system would be installed. Elections were announced for April 1994 - the first ever in South Africa to be conducted on the basis of universal adult suffrage.

Following dramatic concessions by the ANC to both the IFP and the Freedom Front, the major umbrella for the white rightwing, which brought them both into the electoral process at the 11th hour, the election took place as planned - and peacefully - on April 27 and 28.

The ANC was returned as the leading force in the new, non-racial Parliament from which the Government of National Unity was drawn.

Thus it was that South Africa entered the ranks of the world's democracies. Yet the content of democracy - how it would function in practice, how well it would balance majority against minority interests, and how representative of their diverse support bases it would allow political parties to be - was by no means clear under an Interim Constitution whose complexities far exceeded the comprehension of ordinary voters.

It is therefore pertinent to any study of workers' broad political attitudes to focus on their understanding of democracy as it relates to the Parliament they have helped vote into place. To do this, it is necessary first to paint an outline of South Africa's new system of political representation.

South Africa's new political system

Agreement was reached, at an early stage of negotiations, that the existing 'first past the post', constituency based electoral system would be

abandoned for the country's first fully democratic election, and be replaced by proportional representation based on the party list system.

The 'first past the post' system - under which voters choose between individuals to elect a representative of a constituency - had been used since 1910 for electing a House of Assembly under the Westminster system, and since 1983 for electing the white, coloured and Indian houses under the tricameral system.

It was felt that the 'first past the post' system over represented winners, squeezed minorities and encouraged the development of a two party political system. In contrast, proportional representation (PR) - under which voters choose between lists of candidates drawn up by parties - was seen as guaranteeing representation of minorities (Mackenzie 1958).

The Interim Constitution divided the new South Africa, incorporating the old homelands and independent states, into nine new provinces. It also outlined a division of concurrent and exclusive powers between central and provincial governments, and required a two ballot election.

The first ballot was to elect 400 members of the National Assembly, 200 of whom would be drawn proportionately from national party lists and 200 from provincial party lists, with each province being allocated a number of seats proportionate to the size of its population.

The second ballot was for the legislatures of the nine provinces. Again, the number of seats in the legislature varied according to the size of the province's population.

After the elections a Senate was drawn from the nine provincial legislatures, with each providing 10 senators nominated by political parties according to their proportionate strength. The overall picture is shown in Table 2.

The new President - which the Interim Constitution stated should be the leader of the majority party or a person who could command a majority in the Assembly - was elected to head the Government of National Unity, whose members were selected from different parties according to the proportion of electoral votes they received.

Provincial premiers were similarly elected by the provincial legislatures, and 10 other members of provincial executives were chosen in proportion to the strengths of parties which succeeded in securing at least 10% of the vote provincially.

Table 2: Parliamentary Assemblies in the New South Africa				
Provinces	Senate	National Assembly National	Provincial	Provincial Legislatures
Gauteng	10	-	43	86
KwaZulu-Natal	10	-	40	81
Eastern Cape	10	-	28	56
Western Cape	10	-	21	42
Northern Tvl	10	-	20	40
North West	10	-	15	30
Free State	10	-	15	30
Eastern Tvl	10	-	14	30
Northern Cape	10	-	4	30
Total seats	90	200	200	

South African Council of Churches: *South Africa: The Transition to Democracy* (1994: 25)

The new system of representation emerged from the cut and thrust of hard fought negotiation by party élites. It thus owed little to popular input, and little effort was made by parties to determine the views of their followers on constitutional issues.

Our analysis of workers' political attitudes, and most notably of their conception of democracy, may contribute to an understanding of the new system's capacity for securing popular legitimacy. It may also indicate whether changes should be made to a final Constitution to bring government closer to the people.

The participatory approach to democracy

Two of the core findings which emerged from the survey concerned: the manner in which shop floor experiences have been instrumental in shaping the version of democracy embraced by most Cosatu workers, and the way in which this conception has been transferred reflexively into the political arena.

As indicated previously, Cosatu workers are not only familiar with the tenets of a particular version of shop floor democracy, they actually practise it as well. So on the one hand we see that most Cosatu workers subscribe to democratic principles that include:

- ☛ Provision for the regular election of representatives who are thereby mandated to act on behalf of the membership.
- ☛ An obligation on the part of those elected to consult members on all issues that affect them.
- ☛ The duty of representatives to account to members for their actions at all times.
- ☛ Provision for the recall of elected representatives who are deemed not to have adhered to their mandates, or who have otherwise legitimately incurred the displeasure of those who put them into office.

On the other hand, we see that these are not merely principles that exist in the abstract: the vast majority of respondents had recently participated in the election of shop stewards and had also attended regular meetings at which shop stewards had reported back on their activities.

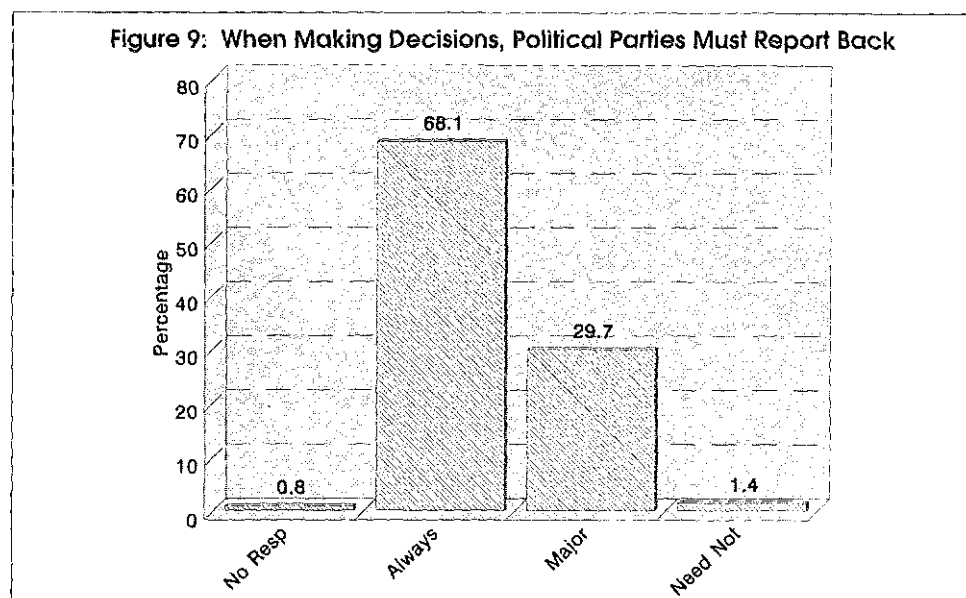
Most Cosatu members surveyed have had tangible experience of representative accountability that must surely have been reinforced by the fact that fully a third of them work in plants where shop stewards have been dismissed by workers for not performing their role satisfactorily.

This commitment to grassroots democracy is hardly surprising. The history of the independent, non-racial labour movement is synonymous with attempts to implement procedures that facilitate some measure of organisational control from below (Friedman 1987: 86-100).

Indeed, many of the old Fosatu unions recruited their members more on the virtues of participatory democracy than the promise of this or that material benefit. And they made strenuous efforts to practise what they preached, even if it is true that different unions did so with varying degrees of enthusiasm and effectiveness (MacShane, Plaut and Ward 1984: 38-42, 65-74; Webster 1984).

The commitment of the labour movement has enabled most established Cosatu unions to root themselves firmly in the workplace. However, what emerged from the survey is that the vigorous culture of shop floor democracy has translated into a rather similar understanding of the new parliamentary political system.

Our data shows, for instance, that most respondents - 68% - believe that the election of political parties imposes a duty on them to consult and report back to their supporters on all issues: in other words, to



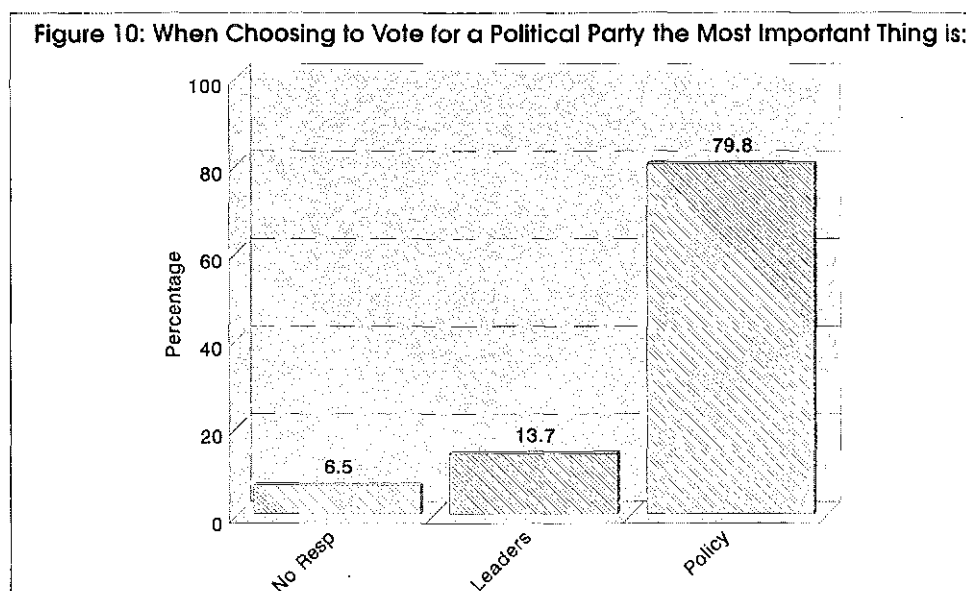
render themselves accountable in every instance where parliamentary decisions affect supporters' interests (Figure 9).

Moreover, the vast majority of Cosatu workers appear to hold the view that if political parties stray from their mandates, they should be subject to immediate recall by the people who elected them.

This is highly problematic for any form of parliamentary system, and no less for South Africa under the Interim Constitution. Let us begin by addressing the question of mandates, and then examine other aspects of this participatory approach to democracy.

Blondel (1990: 346-348) proposes that the 'theory of the mandate' is predicated on four assumptions. They are that:

- ✶ Political parties are disciplined. This situation occurs in most but by no means all Western systems.
- ✶ Voting has to be related to programmes, either on the basis of choices on major issues or through ranking issues. However, voting studies show that electors relate to images rather than issues.
- ✶ The battle between political parties is balanced. Yet where there are more than two parties or when one party is permanently disadvantaged, as in a dominant party system, the scope for competitive mobilisation is impaired.



Competition between political parties' alternative programmes is clear cut. However, the constraints of two or multi-party systems often encourage 'reconciliation' rather than 'mobilisation'.

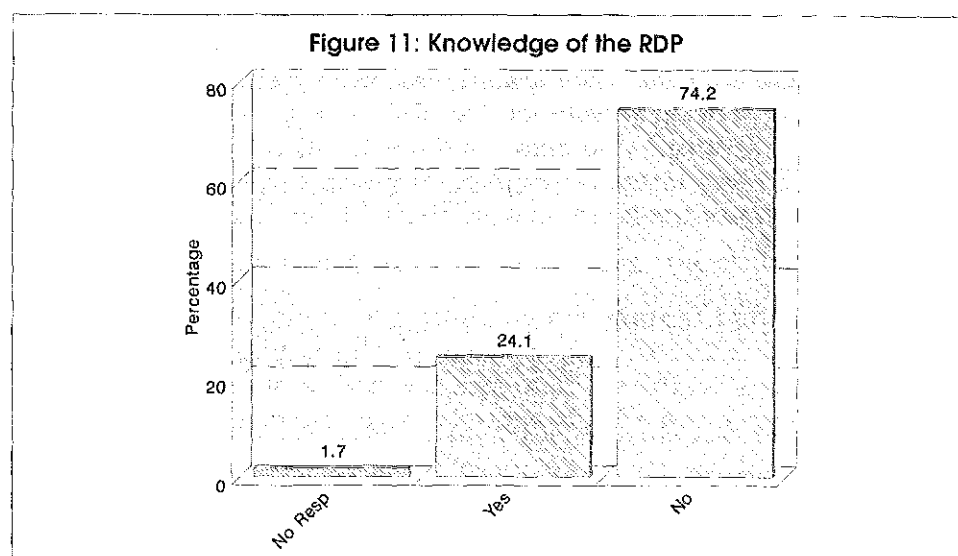
Given these assumptions, it is evident that the idea of the mandate is as yet only very uncertainly applicable in the new South Africa. Nor is it apparent that if it was, it would necessarily serve worker interests.

Regarding the first assumption, parties in the new Parliament may prove to be disciplined, not least because the Interim Constitution requires parliamentarians who change party allegiance to resign, and their places to be taken up by nominees from their original party.

This implies that dissidents expelled from their parties will be forced out of Parliament. In practice the extent to which parties such as the ANC, which are formally committed to open debate, will exercise such strict discipline remains to be seen.

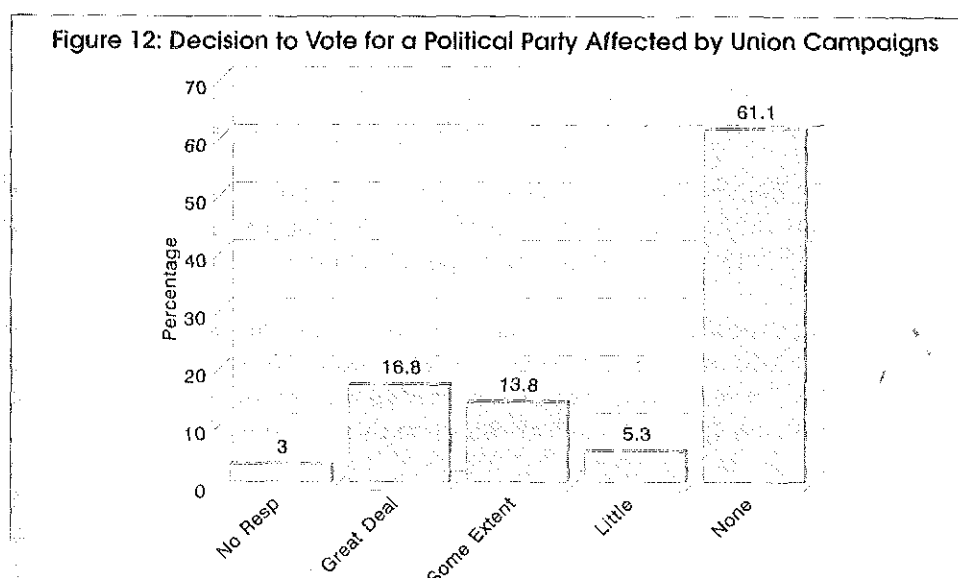
In any case, one of the most common criticisms of list system proportional representation is precisely that it empowers party managers and enables them to quell dissidents. If such dissidents were articulating labour based concerns, is their suppression what Cosatu workers would want to happen?

On the second assumption - that voting has to be related to programmes - the 1994 ballot was for most Africans a liberation election, broadly construed as bringing freedom from oppression (Southall 1994).



Most respondents - 80% - indicated that they would vote for a political party because of its policies rather than its leadership (Figure 10). Relatively few - 24% - knew anything about the RDP, which was a major plank of the Alliance's programme and was principally drawn up by Cosatu (Figure 11).

It was also suggested by well over half - 61% - of our respondents that they had in no way been influenced in their voting intention by any trade union election campaign (Figure 12).



This may point to a deficiency in the ANC's election campaign or in Cosatu's political education, but does it not also suggest that the majority of workers who went on to vote for the ANC were guided by the latter's image? And if, in future, workers continue to allocate their votes like voters elsewhere - by image rather than by policy - will they not become victim to the wiles of the image makers (Saatchi and Saatchi rather than Marx and Engels)?

Regarding the third assumption on which the theory of the mandate is based - that the battle between political parties is balanced - the point should be made that the election gave the ANC a strong 63% majority at the national level, and effective control of seven out of the nine provinces.

Despite numerous protections for minorities built into the Interim Constitution, and the opportunities for representation provided by PR, there are good grounds for believing that the new South Africa will develop into a system dominated by one party, effectively entrenching the ANC in power beyond the next and successive elections (Southall 1994).

This could prove beneficial to worker interest if under the ANC unions are not systematically subordinated to other concerns. However, as a dominant party, the ANC would have to respond to demands from diverse sources of support, and consequently its actions could well conflict with what workers' interpret as the mandate they have given it.

The fourth assumption, that competition between political parties' programmes is clear cut, was true for the 1994 elections, which offered voters a clear choice between the ANC - 'liberation' and the planning strategy of the RDP - versus the National Party and its association with past repression and its discovery of free market economics.

However, the dynamics of a Government of National Unity and of the ANC's commitments to nation building, development and national reconciliation, may well lead to fewer policy choices in later elections.

If we add to the above considerations the fact that the double ballot for elections at national and provincial levels allows voters to 'split their tickets', it becomes clear that workers' strong commitment to the conception of a mandate has to be filtered through many complications.

So many, perhaps, that it is doubtful whether the many lessons about democracy Cosatu workers have learned in the workplace are capable of being transferred to the political arena. Unless we recognise that what

appears at first sight a rather naïve notion of direct democracy actually constitutes elements of a more complex idea.

Towards participatory democracy

The survey showed that Cosatu workers expect the political party they elect to consult them on all issues that affect them and to report back on all related decisions. If the party does not do what its supporters require of it, it should be subject to recall.

Despite their lack of classical learning, the version of democracy practised by trade unionists affiliated to Cosatu might appear to be inspired by the ancient Greek conception of the *polis*.

Discounting the foundation of the Greek model upon the subordination of women and the general conditions of small city states and a slave economy, workers might seem to adhere to a form of direct democracy in which members exercise their equality and rights of self governance by gathering in open meetings to manage their own affairs, and in which officials enjoy no distinctions or privilege (Held 1987: 34).

However, this analogy is more misleading than it is helpful, for such a model has never been adopted by the unions and would scarcely succeed if attempts were ever made to do so. It would fail for precisely the same reasons that direct democracy has typically foundered in any system or organisation that exceeds a certain critical mass in both its membership and functions.

As argued by David Held (1987: 279), the Athenian model cannot be adapted to stretch across space and time, for the problems posed by coordination and regulation in circumstances that are socially, economically and politically differentiated need complicated solutions.

The size and complexity of organisations militates against the successful implementation of direct democracy for two reasons. In the first place, beyond a certain point it becomes physically impossible to bring all members together in one place to participate directly in managing their common affairs.

Secondly, when the internal and external functions of the organisation are such that its ability to perform requires a considerable level of expertise.

it is not feasible to endow the entire membership with a sufficient level of competence to render each perfectly interchangeable with the other.

What tends to happen, instead, is that expertise in managing the affairs of the organisation becomes possessed by a few individuals who then entrench their leadership by restricting access to those skills.

In short, as elaborated among others by Michels (1962), at the beginning of the 20th Century the iron laws of functional efficiency gave rise to oligarchic tendencies even within organisations like socialist political parties and trade unions, which deemed themselves to be committed to democracy.

As mentioned, this oligarchic tendency is already visible in Cosatu. Our data clearly shows that while rank and file members often exercise some control over shop stewards, the decisions for which shop stewards are accountable generally relate exclusively to matters arising on the factory floor.

But similar powers of censure do not seem to extend to officials higher up in union structures, or within Cosatu itself, so that rank and file members appear to have minimal say in decision making processes of a broad economic and political nature.

This point is starkly illustrated by the fact that few respondents even knew what the National Manpower Commission or the National Economic Forum were, to say nothing of their ignorance about the allegedly 'popular' RDP.

Not only were rank and file members not consulted on these matters by 'senior' representatives, but very few of them had attended report back meetings where the rationale behind the formulation of these forums and programmes had been mentioned, let alone explained.

As observed, despite the fact that direct democracy is not feasible within large scale organisations, there is something in its spirit that has always appealed to Cosatu affiliates. In particular, the notion of active participation in the running of unions has resonated with a broad ideological inclination to counter bureaucratic authoritarianism with a substantial measure of control from below.

In practice, this has meant that Cosatu unions have acknowledged the seemingly unavoidable limitations of direct democracy, and opted instead

for a version where the interests of their members are mediated through the offices of regularly elected representatives.

Thus, although members are one or more steps removed from decision making processes, their participation in governance is supposedly assured by their representatives being always bound to adhere to the mandates conferred on them in the electoral process.

This is the *raison d'être* for union procedures that compel representatives to consult their constituencies on a regular basis, report back to them and be removed if they are deemed remiss in performing their duties. Cosatu workers, in short, operate on the basis of something approaching what Held calls 'participatory democracy'.

Aimed at nurturing a concern for collective problems and forming a knowledgeable citizenry capable of being involved in the governing process, Held (1987: 262) writes that participatory democracy at national level would require:

- ☐ Direct participation by citizens in the regulation of key institutions, including the workplace and local community.
- ☐ Accountability of party officials to their members.
- ☐ The operation of 'participatory' parties in parliamentary or congressional structures.
- ☐ Maintaining an open institutional system - in which, for instance, public officials are as accountable to those below as to those above them - to ensure possibility of experimentation with political forms.

All this may not be fully developed in workers' own conceptions of democracy. But they are substantially different to the notion of democracy which underwrites the Interim Constitution.

Participatory versus parliamentary democracy?

Cosatu workers' commitment to a (undeveloped) version of participatory democracy contrasts markedly with the notion of indirect democracy on which the Interim Constitution is based. This is a particularly limited version of representative parliamentary democracy.

The theoretical origins of the parliamentary democracy of South Africa today reflect the tortured compromises out of which it was forged. It

we can identify three key aspects of its peculiar blend, each rooted in the broad framework of liberal democracy (Southall 1993).

Firstly, there is the commitment to majority rule, which the ANC and other parties developed as much from liberalism's language of individual rights as it did from notions of self determination. From the moment of its formation in 1912, the ANC focused on extending full citizenship to all South Africans, regardless of their colour, and thereby transforming Parliament into a genuine congress for all people.

Secondly, there is a large dose of 'consociationalism', which as defined by Lijphart (1977) - and absorbed especially by the National Party - entails, among other things:

- ☞ Government by a grand coalition of political leaders of all significant segments of a plural society.
- ☞ The mutual veto, or concurrent majority principle, designed to protect vital minority interests.
- ☞ Proportionality as the principle standard of political representation.
- ☞ A high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own affairs.

Finally, the Interim Constitution embeds principles of protective democracy - prompted mostly by the Democratic Party but increasingly towards the latter stages of negotiations by the National Party - which, according to Held (1987: 70) emphasise that:

- ☞ Sovereignty ultimately lies in the people, but is delegated to representatives.
- ☞ Accountability is provided by periodic elections and competition between parties.
- ☞ State powers should be limited and impersonal, and divided between the executive, legislature and judiciary.
- ☞ Competing power centres and pressure groups should be encouraged to provide a pole of countervailing power to the state.

The combination of diverse elements of these different approaches to democracy resulted in a new political dispensation which systematically and deliberately limits the exercise of popular power - as, of course, did that first great modern constitution drawn up by the Founding Fathers in the United States in 1787.

These limitations are embodied in all the numerous provisions which seek to contain the writ of government by majority: for instance, the division of sovereignty between Parliament and the Constitutional Court, proportionality between parties in the formation of the Government of National Unity and provincial cabinets, and not least, the division of powers between central and provincial governments.

The very idea of voters entrusting a government with a mandate under this system is highly problematic. So while political parties and politicians will undoubtedly explain their actions by claiming to be doing what the people want, they will in reality be subject only to rather remote popular control.

Rather than being mandated, the majority ANC component of the new Government has secured a much broader, generalised right to govern.

It is in no way bound to consult the electorate or report back to voters, or in any way be held accountable for its actions, save for the distant prospect of rejection in the next elections.

We see, therefore, that a key difference between the notion of democracy embraced by Cosatu members and that advocated as the new hegemony turns on the question of the autonomy of parliamentary representatives.

On the one hand, the participatory approach of Cosatu workers would limit the freedom of political representatives to interpret the national interest by requiring them to consult with the electorate on a regular basis and holding them immediately accountable for failure to do so.

On the other hand, the dominant view sees democracy as a process of electing leaders who, while being constrained by the Interim Constitution, are otherwise free to interpret the national interest as they see fit.

From this perspective, participation in decision making effectively starts and ends with elections. What happens in between is effectively the prerogative of Members of Parliament and the Interim Constitution, and not the people who elected them.

This latter point deserves elaboration, for as implied by earlier discussion around the issue of the mandate, the combination of list system PR and the constitutional restriction on Members of Parliament crossing the floor adds considerably to the autonomy of parties by insulating them from internal dissidence.

Thus, if an individual representative preferred some or other popular interpretation of the national interest to that of his or her party, there would be no opportunity to align him or herself with the wishes of the people.

To this may be added the consideration that the abolition of parliamentary constituencies, as existed under the 'first past the post' system, at one stroke removed the direct connection which was supposed to exist between voters and their local Member of Parliament.

Of course, the election of 200 parliamentarians from provincial lists is clearly intended to provide a cohort of members who will be particularly responsive to regional interests.

Similarly, post-election action by the ANC which has seen allocation of local area responsibilities to individual members arises from concern that the link between voters and their representatives has been broken.

But unless parties, and the ANC particularly, open themselves up to a much higher level of internal participation, not least concerning the selection of candidates and their position on party lists, what has been gained on the roundabouts for voters in terms of proportional representation - 'every vote counts' and guaranteed minority representation - may be lost on the swings, in increased control for party bosses.

It must be stressed that the contradiction between Cosatu workers' notion of participatory democracy and the Interim Constitution's embodiment of parliamentary democracy, is latent.

Our data does not indicate that Cosatu workers are aware of any disjuncture between their democratic vision and the aspirations of the new order. There seems to be an assumption that the electoral process is designed to confer mandates on parties, with all the implications of constant consultancy and report back that this implies.

Cosatu workers seemed convinced that because the new Parliament is the first to be constituted on the basis of universal adult suffrage and thus the first to comprise members who are there as formally representative of all people, it will be an effective forum - or even the best forum - for redressing the injustices of the past and pursuing the interests of workers.

Since this is so, the ANC - as the leading force in the struggle against apartheid and the leading element in the Government of National Unity

- may well enjoy a longer honeymoon with organised labour than many commentators expect.

If the contradiction between the two views of democracy becomes manifest during the five years in which the Interim Constitution operates, positive sentiments on the part of workers may prove merely to be an endorsement of the first Parliament of national liberation.

In that case, workers' pursuit of the politics of national liberation might be replaced by a politics of class. At this stage, however, Cosatu workers seem to find no clear distinction between the two types of agenda.

Workers, democracy and nation building

Cosatu workers may support a Parliament of national liberation, but they nevertheless operate with complex and fluid notions of their own identities.

In some situations, notably those closely related to point of production issues and conditions under which their labour is bought and deployed, they seem to think of themselves unambiguously as workers with specific class interests.

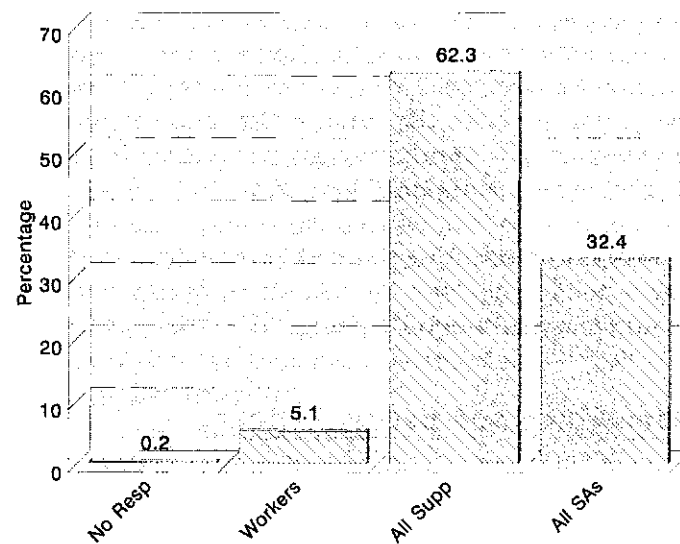
But in other circumstances, especially when they step outside the factory gates into larger arenas of community, regional and national politics, their working class self images seem to be subsumed under or equated with a broader South African identity.

Put rather differently, they either see themselves as South Africans first and workers later, or draw no distinction between being a worker and being a South African.

Evidence of this was seen in Cosatu workers' responses to being asked whether a party which had won working class support in the election should represent only workers, or should take cognisance of other interests as well.

Overwhelmingly, respondents expressed a deep seated commitment to the nation building politics of the Tripartite Alliance in which their interests as workers would either be given only parity with - 62% - or would be subordinated to - 32% - the interests of other classes or the nation as a whole (Figure 13).

Figure 13: If the Majority of a Party's Supporters are Workers, it Must Represent



In this respect, Cosatu members seem to be as reluctant as their counterparts in most other countries to systematically disentangle their class from their national identities.

This would seem to be good news for the ANC which, as leader of a multi-class alliance charged with governmental responsibilities, clearly has a crucial stake in ideologically asserting the supremacy of national interest over sectional interests - especially sectional interests with as much disruptive potential as a working class organised by Cosatu.

It may be that in the interests of maintaining the unity of the Alliance, neither Cosatu nor the SACP found it strategically appropriate to clarify distinctions between working class and national identities in the build up to the election.

But now that the ANC has secured itself as the leading force in the Government of National Unity, this could be set to change. On the one hand, it seems likely that Cosatu and/or the SACP will turn their attention to constructing a more socialist consciousness among the working class.

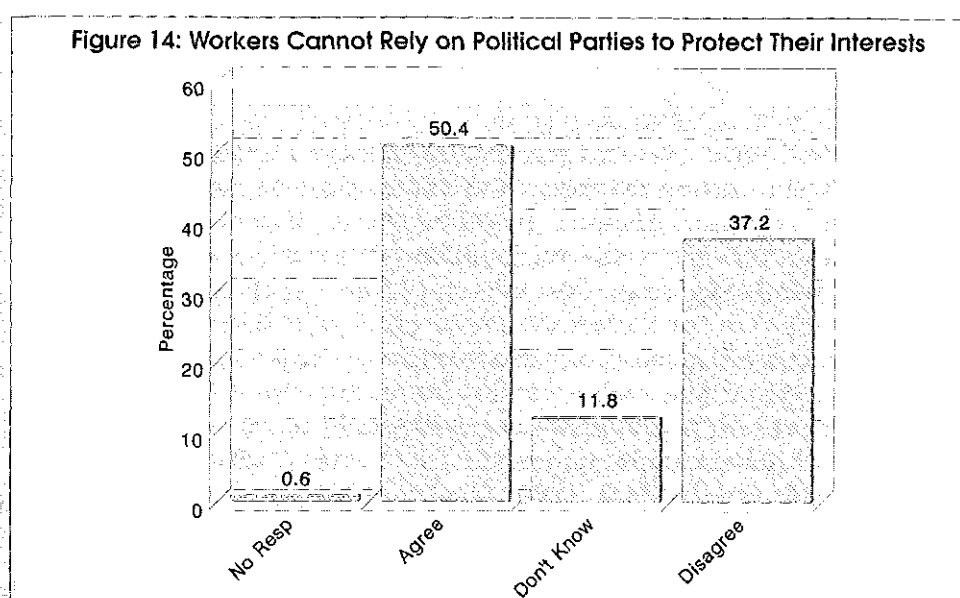
On the other hand, even if such a project is postponed in favour of continuing to promote an uncomplicated agenda of nation building under the ANC, there is no guarantee that the contradiction between class and national interests will not become explicit.

This becomes clearer when we examine closely workers' views of relations between trade unions and worker based political parties.

Workers, unions and parties

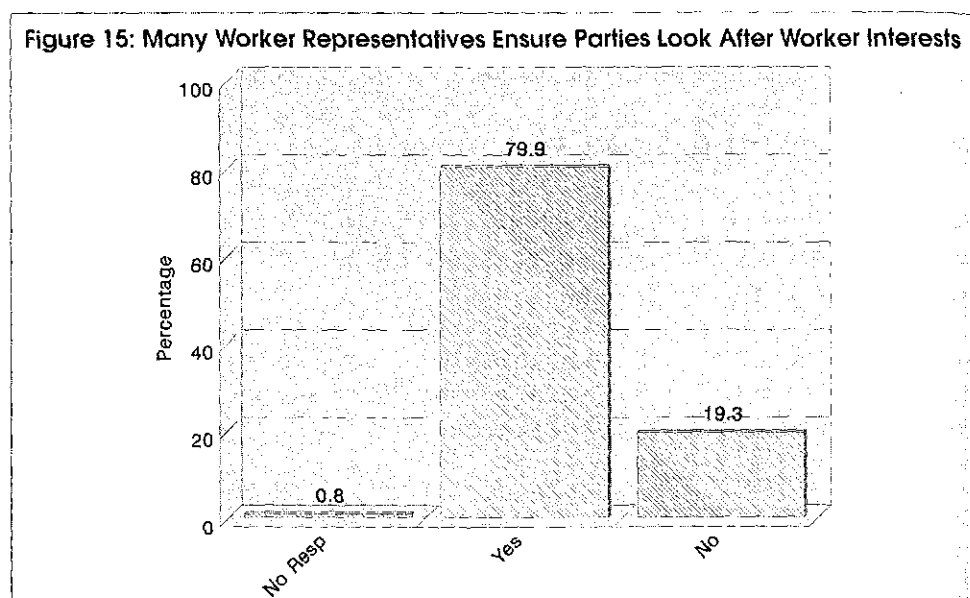
Some 95% of those surveyed felt that a mainly - but not exclusively - worker backed political party should represent the interests of more than just the working class.

Yet workers were considerably divided in their responses to another question: some 50% agreed and 37% disagreed with the proposition that workers cannot rely on political parties to protect their interests (Figure 14).



In contrast, there was virtual unanimity - 95% - that workers will always need trade unions to protect their interests, and high support - 80% - for the view that a strong presence of former trade unionists in a parliamentary caucus would be the best way of ensuring that a political party kept worker interests at heart (Figure 15).

This question was posed because of the 20 prominent Cosatu trade unionists, headed by former secretary general Jay Naidoo, who resigned from Cosatu to stand for the ANC in the elections.



It also followed hard upon a long standing debate in at least the upper reaches of Cosatu about how many hats trade unionists could legitimately wear in the Tripartite Alliance. In other words, if they held office in either the ANC or SACP, could trade union office bearers simultaneously and uninhibitedly represent Cosatu?

Even within the Alliance, would there not be a conflict of interest? And if there was, would not such a conflict be more acute if trade unionists were translated into parliamentarians who would be constantly assailed to consider national rather than sectional concerns? (National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa 1990; Zikalala 1991).

Our respondents' overwhelming support for trade unions is remarkable, even though our sample was drawn exclusively from Cosatu trade unionists. Given that real average wage levels declined during the transition from 1990, it would not have been at all surprising if workers had privately expressed some doubt about the utility of their union membership.

That they expressed such confidence in the need for trade unions seems to reflect an understanding of unions as agencies of a wider liberation, as having played a vital role in the struggle against apartheid.

The workers we surveyed viewed their unions as involved in more than just an economic battle, reflecting the social movement character of Cosatu unionism that has prevailed since its inception a decade ago.

From the outset, Cosatu had to perform functions that far exceeded those normally associated with trade unions. While it obviously devoted much of its energies to advancing the economic interests of its members, it did so not merely by employing strategies classically adopted by unions everywhere - combining negotiations with militancy as was deemed appropriate - but also by mobilising around wider community concerns.

In a period of massive state assault upon explicitly political organisations such as the UDF, trade unions - and Cosatu in particular - as supposedly economic organisations which enjoyed the significant support of the international labour movement, were compelled to step out into the political arena.

Workers came increasingly to view economic and political oppression as simultaneous, with the result that trade unions became inextricably engaged in struggle on both fronts.

For its part Cosatu proved, by its early acknowledgement of the ANC's leading political role, that it was 'merely' a trade union federation and had no intention of replacing the ANC as a movement of liberation.

However, by its involvement in the Alliance after the politics of transition began and the ANC resumed leadership of the struggle inside the country, Cosatu also stated that it remained committed to pursuing an agenda which did not construe workers' interests in narrowly economic terms.

What is interesting is that Cosatu workers share this conception, and that they trust the ability of leaders from a trade union background to pursue worker interests from within the ANC and Parliament. Or at least, they indicated that a party with a body of former trade unionists in it was more likely to promote worker interests than a party without one.

Here, it seems, we get echoes of workers' faith in the notion of a mandate - despite the fact that, unlike in Britain, where trade unions directly sponsor and put forward to constituencies a number of Labour Party Members of Parliament, there is no formal connection devised to provide for dual representation.

While in Britain, Labour MPs remain members of and acknowledge connection to their unions, and are put there explicitly to protect and promote trade union interests (Coates and Topham 1982: 304-308). former Cosatu parliamentarians

It may be that this lack of organic connection between Cosatu and the ANC in Parliament will ultimately lead to workers doubting the commitment of political parties - even those with strong worker backing - to protect working class interests.

A significant proportion of our respondents evinced unease over whether even hardened trade unionists, when removed from the grime of the factory to the heady air of Parliament, would retain loyalty to their political origins for long.

This is, of course, consistent with workers' insistence on accountability and their leaning towards participatory democracy. But it also poses immense challenges to Cosatu concerning how it thinks it will, in the new era of liberation politics, operationalise its commitment to social transformation.

Workers, democracy and social transformation

The Interim Constitution provides for South Africa to be ruled by a multi-party Government of National Unity for five years, during which time a new and final Constitution will be adopted by a Constituent Assembly. The final Constitution will operate after the next general election.

However, since it was agreed during negotiations that the principles of the Interim Constitution would provide a basis for the final Constitution, it appears that the Constitutional Assembly will not do much more than tinker with the present arrangement.

This suggests that the principles of representative parliamentary democracy currently applied in South Africa and extended down to local government level, are bound to become hegemonic, although the forms - such as the electoral system - may be amended.

If we are correct in identifying worker respondents as being disposed towards a nascent form of participatory rather than representative democracy, it will obviously pose a challenge to Cosatu - and especially trade unionists elected to national Parliament and regional assemblies.

In short, because Cosatu's social movement character has imparted to it a leadership role among the dispossessed, it should become Cosatu's particular task to broaden the base of consultation in a way which renders the new political system responsive to the needs and wishes not just of

civil society and trade unions but also all those whom apartheid disempowered. This challenge will require Cosatu to pose a number of critical strategic questions:

- ☐ Should it continue its membership of the Alliance in the hope of delivering what workers expect from the new democracy?
- ☐ Should it break from the Alliance on the grounds that the ANC, as the leading force in government compelled to engage in continuing compromise with non-popularly based domestic and international forces, will need to become subject to external, popularly based counter pressures to keep it accountable to the mass of ordinary South Africans who elected it?
- ☐ Should Cosatu end its alliance with the ANC, the party of nation, but retain its alliance to the SACP, the party of class? Or should it align to some other political party of the left? Or should it attempt with other unions to create a new workers' party, free of the Stalinist baggage which many claim the SACP is unable to leave behind?
- ☐ Should Cosatu detach itself from all political parties and devote its energies and considerable organisational muscle to the task of democratising the political economy from below?
- ☐ Should Cosatu consider whether a genuinely participatory democracy is attainable within the confines of *bourgeois* liberal democracy. And if it concludes that it is not, should it not commit itself to a revolutionary socialist objective?

It is important to appreciate that these are not questions plucked out of thin air: they have all been debated at some length within Cosatu and among other forums of the South African left (Pillay 1990; Von Holdt 1991; Mboweni 1992; Erwin 1994).

There cannot be any attempt made here to prescribe what Cosatu should do. However, what can be legitimately offered are suggestions about what our respondents would seem to be saying about various options on offer.

The good news for the ANC is that the survey demonstrates Cosatu workers' overwhelming support, for the moment at least, for the new Parliament, for the Government of National Unity and for continuing the Tripartite Alliance.

With such familiar and experienced Cosatu warriors as Ministers Alec Erwin and Jay Naidoo entrusted with key portfolios which refer directly to workers' well being, our survey indicates what we already know from the result of the election: that the new Government is the embodiment of immense popular trust and expectation.

It can be said with equal confidence that the survey offers no support at all for those who would like to see Cosatu, whether from inside or outside government, adopt a revolutionary socialist objective.

This finding is also an endorsement of the election result, which registered a derisory level of support for parties of the far left like the Workers List Party, which failed to secure a single representative nationally or in the provinces in which it stood.

As the SACP acknowledged in its decision that members who stood for Parliament should do so as belonging to the ANC, the commitment of workers - and others oppressed by apartheid - was primarily to the politics of national liberation and only secondarily to the politics of socialism. And that was, after all, what the SACP's two stage theory of securing democracy before proceeding to socialism, was all about.

What the survey says about other options is discussed in greater detail in the following chapters. But there is little doubt that the survey revealed tendential opposition between workers' orientation to participatory democracy and the reality of the new South Africa, which embodies the more indirect form of representative democracy.

Were such a clash to become explicit, one or a mix of three outcomes would probably eventuate. Firstly, as in many other liberal democracies, workers would become depoliticised if not alienated, and would leave the arena of politics to be dominated by other classes. Secondly, they would attempt to render representative democracy more participatory. And thirdly, they would gravitate by stages to a revolutionary agenda.

We now turn to a more extended discussion of what the survey has to say about workers' attitudes to Cosatu's involvement in policy making and to the future role of trade unions.



COSATU AND THE RDP

In post-independence Africa the state became the central arena for international and local business interests and other parties to pursue their goals in the civic and private spheres. Political and administrative positions became strategic sites for acquiring material resources and controlling or regulating economic opportunities.

The state came to see itself as the main vehicle for development, invoking the notion of 'national development' to justify its management of the economy (Dutkiewicz and Williams 1987: 41). The state in effect became a growth industry, with the extended bureaucracy offering a means of providing for and controlling the appointment of followers and retainers (Hyden 1983: 41).

The widened scope of state activities was accompanied by an increase in claims made on the state by a wide variety of clients. The range of activities the state was supposed to be responsible for placed a growing strain on its administrative and financial resources.

Recourse was usually made to skilled foreign manpower - expensive 'experts' - and additional funds for development had to be found. Foreign aid helped in this and in other respects, with the consequent growth of the 'development state' (Dutkiewicz and Williams 1987: 42).

A number of scholars have commented on the way development planning became an almost ritualistic exercise. Acting on the implicit belief that rational control over the economic environment is possible, leaders of newly developed states in Africa began to engage in planning mostly in good faith. Hyden (1983) describes this emphasis on planning as the 'blueprint' approach to development.

Some decades ago the distinguished European philosopher, Karl Popper, coined the term 'piecemeal social engineering'. Popper's intention was to articulate a practical and democratic alternative to the utopian blueprints of the people he derided as 'holistic planners' - especially those of fascist or Stalinist orientation.

To Popper, piecemeal social engineering was the policy practice appropriate to decentralised political systems, whereas holistic large scale change was the hallmark of authoritarian systems (Popper 1945).

A number of commentators have implied that the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme is a utopian blueprint, drawn up by the equivalent of Popper's 'holistic planners'. They argue that the RDP relies too much on a strong centralised state. They believe it is likely to reproduce features of the over blown post-colonial state.

Others argue that while the RDP is clearly a visionary document, the programme is not statist - although it does not believe that the legacy of apartheid can be overcome by mere piecemeal and marginal changes to the *status quo*.

Rather, the programme's authors believe a radical change of South African society is needed. But while the goals are radical their approach to change is not revolutionary. Some have called this approach structural reform, others have called it radical reform (Saul 1991; Adler and Webster 1995).

✓ The foundations of this alternative approach to policy formulation were laid in the early 1990s, most particularly when Cosatu began to participate in tripartite structures and a range of national forums. However, Cosatu's involvement in such a planning exercise raised complex questions.

✓ It is widely believed, for instance, that as trade unions become drawn into policy making their leadership tends to become distanced from its base.

✓ How can distanced leaders be made accountable to grassroots members? How is it possible to prevent the 'democratic rupture' that often accompanies involvement in corporatist tripartite arrangements between capital, labour and the state? Do unions have the capacity to engage in policy making?

In this section of the study we analyse the views of respondents to union involvement in policy making. Our results show some indication of a 'democratic rupture' between the growing involvement of the union movement in policy making and rank and file members.

✓ These findings are a major challenge to those who believe in the goal of participatory and non-statist development.

The National Manpower Commission

One of the first signs of this shift to a new approach to policy making was the involvement of Cosatu in attempts to restructure the former National Manpower Commission (NMC).

Through the *Laboria Minute* of September 1990, the NMC was restructured to make it more representative of trade unions and employers rather than selected academic and state employees.

Cosatu conceived of the NMC as a national bargaining forum where labour policies and legislation would become the responsibility of employers and unions rather than the state alone.

This goal was achieved when the NMC merged with the National Economic Forum in early 1995, creating the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac), a multi-partite body consisting of organised labour, organised employees, communities, and government.

The central objective of Nedlac is for these four mandated constituencies to reach consensus on economic and social policy before it is debated in Parliament.

But the goal of corporatist style decision making was not without problems, as one participant recalls:

"The Federation's infrastructure, the state of development of its affiliates, and its general shortage of skills and resources made principled engagement difficult at times...As the events speeded up in the last months of the campaign (to restructure the NMC) and as procedures, schedules and agendas became more complex, our information flow bogged down. Many workers lost touch with actual developments." (Schreiner 1991: 40)

Concern over Cosatu's capacity to participate in complex negotiations in tripartite institutions was confirmed by the abortive lock out strike in October 1993.

A dispute arose when Cosatu representatives agreed in the NMC to a compromise in which the right of workers to strike would be entrenched in the Interim Constitution, while employers would have the right to lock out employees on strike.

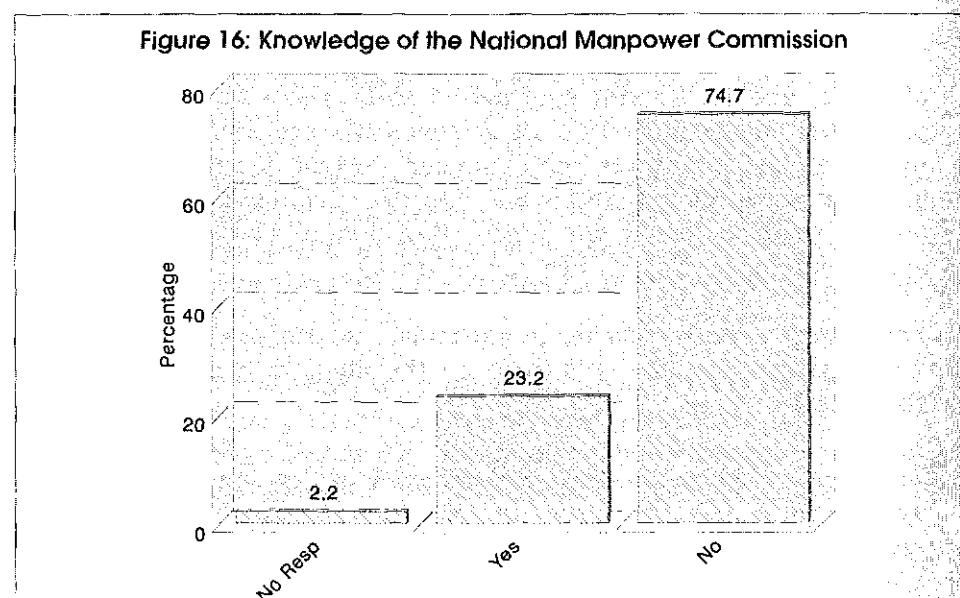
By writing both rights into the Bill of Rights, Cosatu representatives believed that unions would have something to gain (the right to strike which they did not have as employers could dismiss workers during a strike) and nothing to lose (employers already had the right to lock out).

At the Cosatu Executive Committee meeting that month, however, a number of unionists objected to a lock out clause in the Bill of Rights, arguing that it was a fundamental attack on worker rights.

It was decided to call a general strike unless Cosatu's objections to the lock out clause were met. Cosatu was eventually forced to back down when employers refused to budge. Employers' ability to lock out and workers' right to strike both remained in the interim Bill of Rights (Von Holdt 1993). Both of these provisions were included in the Draft Labour Relations Bill published in February 1995.

The 1993 strike underlined the problems of relations between negotiators and the constitutional structures of Cosatu. There was seldom time during NMC negotiations for delegates to meet with the leadership and membership of Cosatu to discuss issues.

In this incident the NMC delegate had to rely on discussions with Cosatu's legal advisers, where a compromise was agreed. But the delegate failed to inform Cosatu's Executive Committee of his discussions and the fact that he had supported the compromise in the NMC.



Lack of adequate mandating and report back was confirmed in our survey. Most workers interviewed had never had report backs on Cosatu's involvement in the NMC. Indeed, 75% did not know what the NMC was (Figure 16).

These results raise fundamental questions about the capacity of Cosatu to participate effectively in other forums, such as the National Housing Forum, the National Education and Training Forum and various regional development and local government forums.

If Cosatu could not ensure adequate mandating and report back in a forum which was directly concerned with worker interests, how could it avoid the same problem in other forums?

National Economic Forum

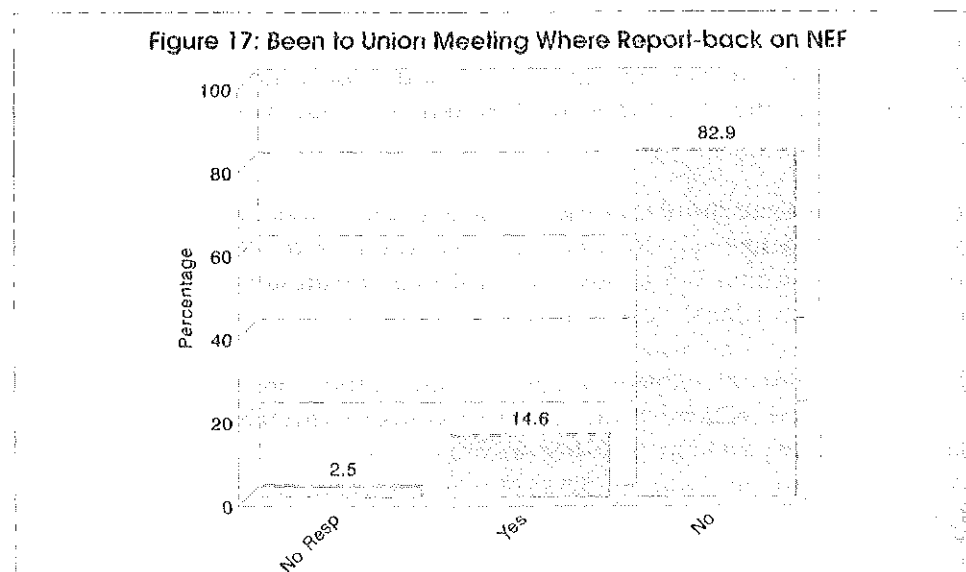
Similar problems to those experienced by Cosatu in its involvement in the former NMC emerged with regard to the former National Economic Forum (NEF).

Launched in November 1992, the NEF was a permanent tripartite forum to negotiate economic policy. The original proposals for the forum were put forward by Cosatu in the wake of the massive stayaway protesting the unilateral introduction of VAT in November 1991.

Initially Cosatu saw the NEF as a negotiating body where formal binding agreements would be reached between representatives of state, business and labour. This view was not generally accepted in the NEF, with the state arguing that Parliament was sovereign in determining government policy. The ANC shared this view and argued that the NEF was a multipartite advisory body where organs of civil society could participate in and influence policy making.

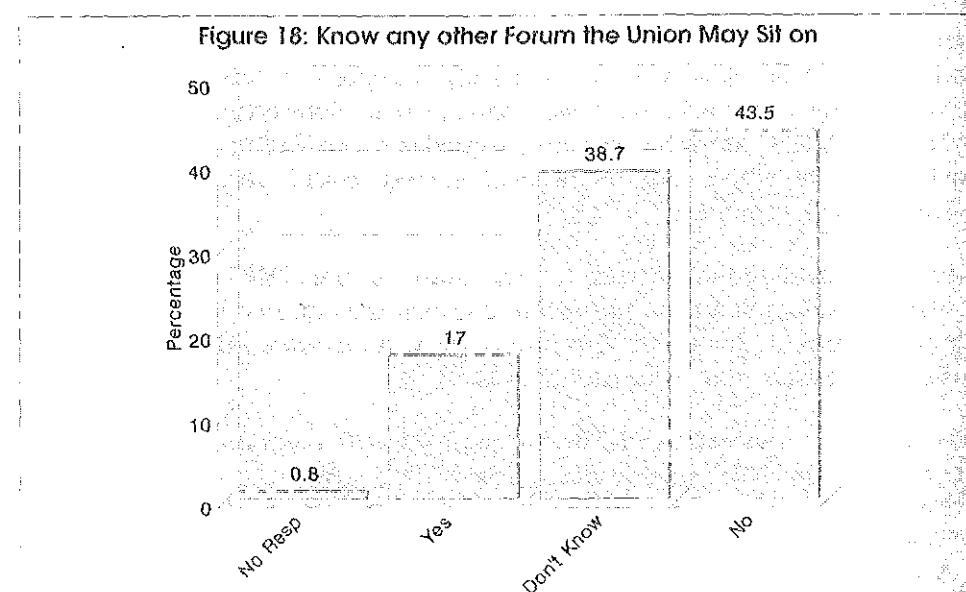
Given the ambiguous attitude of the state to the NEF, Cosatu had to contribute a significant proportion of its resources in an effort to maintain the policy making forum. It also had to draw its membership into debates around economic policy formulation.

Our survey shows that did not happen. Of 620 respondents, only 120 knew what the NEF was. Indeed, fewer than 15% had ever been at a union meeting where there had been discussions on the NEF (Figure 17). When questioned about whether they knew of other forums Cosatu was sitting on, only 17% answered in the affirmative (Figure 18).



It appears that the bulk of Cosatu's members did not know of their organisation's involvement in a multitude of forums.

This despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of respondents felt it would not be possible for the Government to make policies affecting workers without consulting them - and that they had high expectations of an ANC government bringing them more than just political liberation. This brings us to the RDP.



The RDP

Five principles underlie the economic and political philosophy of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (ANC 1994). They are:

- ☞ That the legacy of apartheid cannot be overcome in a piecemeal fashion. It requires coordinated policies.
- ☞ That its point of departure is people's basic needs.
- ☞ That the massive divisions in our society require nation building.
- ☞ That growth and redistribution are interdependent.
- ☞ That those four principles are dependent on a thoroughgoing democratisation of South Africa.

The last principle points in the direction of a potentially different political culture to that of either statism or piecemeal social engineering. The authors call this alternative approach participatory democracy.

The first step in this direction was taken in drawing up the programme. The RDP grew out of the forces struggling to transform South Africa and the demands of ordinary members of the ANC, its allies in the trade unions, civics and other social movements, as well as many policy researchers linked to the ANC Alliance.

It has been openly debated at many conferences both inside the ANC and among its allies. The sixth draft of the RDP was made public, and a range of players outside the Alliance have been consulted and invited to comment on it. This open approach to policy formulation is unique in our country's history.

However, the real test of the innovativeness of the RDP will lie in its implementation. Democracy, the RDP argues:

“...is not confined to periodic elections. It is rather an active process enabling everyone to contribute to reconstruction and development.”
(ANC 1994: 7)

To democratise and make the new Government efficient is a daunting task. Especially as the new Government will be crucially dependent - at least in the short to medium term - on civil servants trained under the apartheid state.

But the intention of the authors of the RDP is quite clearly not to rely on the state alone to deliver the new South Africa. The state will support and coordinate the formulation and implementation of social policy. The RDP envisages a partnership between the key stakeholders. It states:

"The democratic order we envisage must foster a wide range of institutions of participatory democracy in partnership with civil society on the basis of informed and empowered citizens." (ANC 1994: 120).

That is the difference between the process of transition in South Africa and in Latin America and Eastern Europe. Apartheid did not die because of a change of heart among rulers. It was largely a response to organised pressures from below.

The anti-apartheid struggle created powerful social movements and community based organisations that the RDP conceives of as a 'major asset in the effort to democratise and develop our society' (ANC 1994: 121).

The estimated 230 forums that grew up as legitimate transitional institutions in the early 1990s are mentioned by the RDP as potential partners. These forums are arguably unique among countries undergoing transition from authoritarianism. But their precise role is not spelled out in the RDP.

The RDP also envisages an important role for the country's estimated 15 000 non-profit, non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Their economic clout alone makes NGOs important actors in African states. As one analyst noted:

"Northern NGOs now collectively transfer to the South more than the World Bank group does." (Sandberg 1993: 8)

In developing this participatory path to policy, the ANC and its allies are going to have to walk a tightrope. They face the danger of being held to ransom by social movements when they fail to deliver according to expectations. *Business Day* alluded to this when it warned of the danger of the South African National Civics Organisation (Sanco) installing itself as the:

"...gatekeeper through which all applications must be made, all decisions must be made, all decisions transmitted and all funding allocated." (*The Enforcer*, March 11, 1994)

But to conceive of these organisations as obstacles on the road to democracy is to misunderstand their role in deepening democracy. Instead of trying to marginalise them, the RDP calls for attention to be given to:

“...enhancing the capacity of such formations to adapt to partially changed roles.” (ANC 1994: 121)

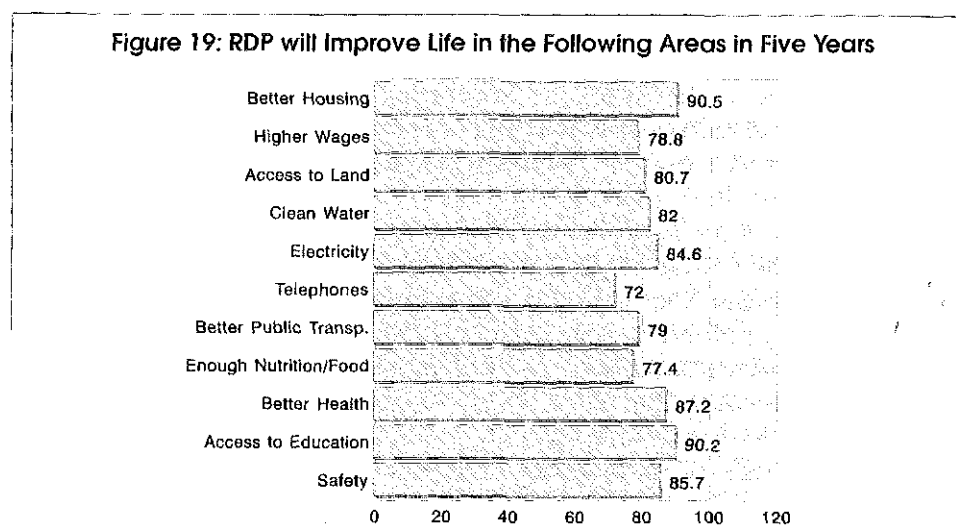
The most difficult challenge facing anti-apartheid organisations is to shift from a political culture of resistance to one of reconstruction, while retaining their hard won independence.

Organisations such as Sanco and Cosatu cannot undertake this task on their own. But whether they meet the challenge will depend on the extent to which government performance manages to adequately address workers' expectations.

Workers' expectations, the Alliance and democracy

Most respondents had never heard of the RDP nor participated in its formulation. Against this, some 44% saw the RDP as able to provide improvements in their working and living conditions. Due to lack of involvement, however, 50% of respondents were uncertain as to whether it would do so.

Nevertheless, when confronted with specific demands, between 72% and 90% of workers thought the new Government would improve their lives



over the next five years by providing better housing and public transport, higher wages, access to land, clean water, electricity, telephones, education and training, nutritional food and a safe and healthy working environment (Figure 19).

Does this indicate unrealistically high expectations? Firstly, the way in which the question was posed invited workers to respond in the affirmative.

Secondly, their commitment to the Tripartite Alliance and thereby to the RDP was consistent with the understanding that the new Government will be able to meet some of their needs within the next five years - especially if they view the RDP as a policy they have mandated the Government to carry out.

Despite workers' lack of information and participation in formulating policies, there appeared to be a high level of trust in the leaders of the Tripartite Alliance. This was consistent with support for having worker leaders in Parliament to represent their interests - 80% - and for Parliament as the best vehicle for representing workers' interests - 60% - noted in Chapter 4.

In this context, legitimising the state's role in reconstruction will clearly require a new relationship between civil society and institutions of class power. The RDP is likely to give rise to an increasing number of joint policy making forums, but with the danger of increasing state control over civil society.

Where working class demands for social change outstrip the ability of the capitalist class to deliver, as is potentially the case in South Africa, the enlargement of the public sector through nationalisation and state planning might re-emerge as a popular demand. But such policies would receive little support from international capital and international lending institutions.

However, the reluctance of the Government to consider part or even full ownership over the commanding heights of the economy might mean that the most productive and technologically advanced sectors remain largely beyond the state's control and hamper its ability to restructure society and the economy.

Social and welfare services spelled out in the RDP might fall short of projected targets due to insufficient administrative control over private enterprises, the imposition of strict monetary policies, the structural crisis

of the South African economy, intransigence on the part of civil servants or any number of associated constraints.

The RDP could then foreseeably generate contradictions that would lead to its undoing. Some believe that the publication of the RDP draft White Paper in September 1994 'represented a very significant compromise to the neo-liberal, trickle down economic policy preferences of the old regime' (Adelzadeh and Padayachee 1994). They argue that the RDP White Paper is:

"...an essentially neo-liberal RDP strategy which...may well generate some level of economic growth; should this happen, the existing mainly white and Indian bourgeois will be consolidated and strengthened; the black *bourgeoisie* will grow rapidly; a black middle class and some members of the black urban working class will become incorporated into the magic circle of insiders; but for the remaining 60% to 70% of our society this growth path, we venture to predict, will deliver little or nothing for many years to come." (Adelzadeh and Padayachee 1994: 16)

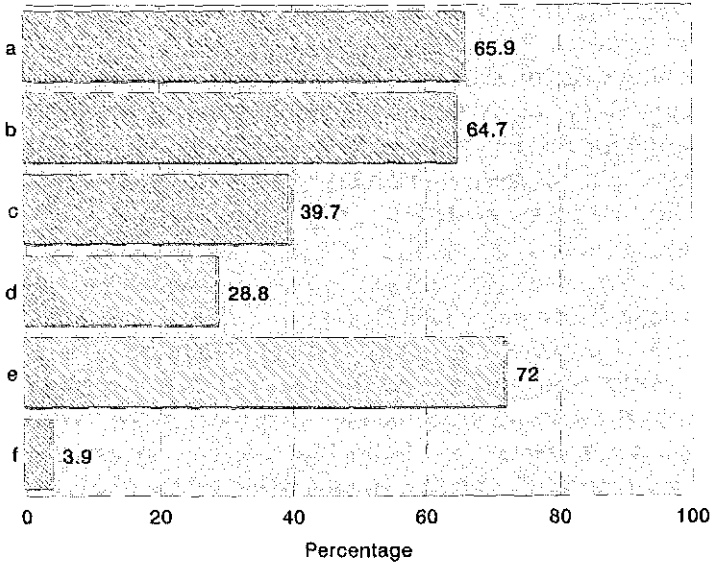
This leads to consideration of whether the Tripartite Alliance could succeed in binding Cosatu members to consensus politics and restricting their struggles to the parameters of collective bargaining. Narrowing Cosatu to collective bargaining could well consolidate the divisions between the 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

Despite the high levels of trust in the Alliance and in Parliament, if the ANC Government fails to deliver on most of the benefits spelled out in the RDP, very few respondents in our survey would remain passive.

This must be seen in relation to the finding that only about 2% of respondents believed it would be possible for the new Government to make policies without consulting their supporters. It was also in line with the majority response that workers would always need unions to represent their interests, and with the culture of militancy and direct democracy in the labour movement.

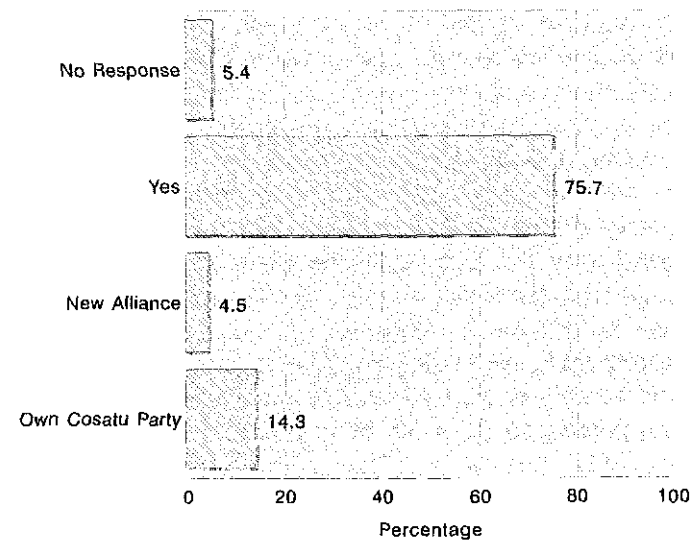
In short, our respondents indicated that if their expectations were not met they would readily engage in direct, extra-parliamentary action: 72% of workers supported the option of ongoing mass action to force the Government to deliver on its promises; 66% supported the idea of putting pressure on former unionists sent to Parliament; and the same number supported engaging in collective action through unions (Figure 20).

Figure 20: If Government Fails to Deliver Benefits, Workers Will:



- a. Put pressure on former unionists that were sent to Parliament
- b. Collective action by unions
- c. Vote for another party in the next election
- d. Form an alternative party that will provide benefits to workers
- e. Participate in on-going mass action to force the Government to deliver on its promises
- f. Do nothing

Figure 21: Do You Think the Alliance Should Fight 1999 Elections



All three of these options involve extra-parliamentary activity without necessarily breaking support for the Tripartite Alliance. This is reinforced by support shown for the continuation of the Alliance - 76% (Figure 21).

However, there was a significant minority throughout expressing the view that worker interests might best be served outside the ANC Alliance, through an independent workers' party or through Cosatu's non-alignment with any party. Forty percent said they would vote for another party in the next election, and 29% said they would support the formation of an alternative workers' party.

It can be postulated that if dissatisfaction with the ability of the Alliance to meet expectations grows, this minority would grow. However, it is clear that the SACP is not seen by workers as being able to play this role, and does not have - for the moment at least - a separate identity as the political representative of the working class.

All this suggests that containing industrial conflict within the bounds of what a multi-class alliance will tolerate will become increasingly difficult, even when it is legitimised in terms of the national interest.

Yet the success of such an endeavour might well turn on the extent to which leaders in the labour movement would be able and willing to act in ways which run contrary to the interests of members.

This is likely to lead to conflict as our survey clearly reveals a deep belief among Cosatu members in the principles of rank and file democracy and their willingness to engage in struggle if their needs are not met.

These conflicts are likely to be exacerbated by greater involvement of specialists as the process of transforming apartheid capitalism becomes increasingly complex. Furthermore, an aspiring African *bourgeoisie* and a growing class of civil servants will conceivably attempt to construct a vision of transformation that leaves their class privileges intact.

Such a scenario would alienate mass based organs of civil society even further from the policy making process. This has not escaped the attention of the left wing in the labour movement:

"Wage restraint + strict monetary policies + eternal cooperative partnership between capital and labour + achieve higher levels of profitability + government expenditure within existing constraints = the workers will pay." (Etkind and Harvey: 1993 86).

As long as the primary responsibility for production and distribution remains with the owners of capital, the state will risk an economic crisis if it fails to implement policies acceptable to capital.

Moreover, the extent to which any potential threat to the dominance of the capitalist class can be transformed into an actual challenge is limited by the larger capitalist context - and corresponding class relations - in which the new Government has to operate. As Przeworski (1991: 34) correctly notes:

"Even a procedurally perfect democracy may remain an oligarchy: the rule of the rich over the poor."

A pluralist, representative democracy consists of complex rules, procedures and institutions which by their very nature obscure the extra-parliamentary power of capital, civil service and the military, and are generally inimical to rapid and fundamental change.

Powerful interests are cloaked by the ideology of parliamentary 'sovereignty' and compromise politics. Indeed, while a government-trade union alliance could in a sense conduct class struggle through the state, this may itself undermine the viability and 'relative autonomy' of the state. Held argues (1987: 120):

"If state intervention undermines the process of capital accumulation, it simultaneously undermines the material basis of the state...(That is) constraints exist in liberal democracies - constraints imposed by the requirements of private capital accumulation - which systematically limit policy options."

What is being argued, in other words, is that the transition to parliamentary democracy in South Africa should not be allowed to obscure the crucial centres of power that remain beyond the organisational and hegemonic control of the new Government.

A commitment to parliamentarianism may obstruct the ability to penetrate the institutional framework of society and expose the real power relations underlying these institutional forms.

Transitions to representative democracy in Latin America, write Harding and Petras (1988: 11), reveal that newly elected popular governments have often propagated:

"...the doctrine that regressive socio-economic policies that benefit the foreign and domestic elite are a necessary trade-off for 'democracy'...

"A false dichotomy is put forth between authoritarian and democratic regimes, obscuring the active role that the authoritarians played as negotiators and facilitators of the transition, and, more important, the power they continue to exercise over the instruments of violence."

An accompanying theme is attempts by the left to avoid mass mobilisation against the elected government because of the danger of provoking a return to dictatorship.

The Brazilian communist parties, for example, argued that in order to sustain the space created by parliamentary democracy, mass strikes, mass action, seizure of land and other forms of militant struggle should be discarded in favour of electoral pacts and broad alliances with the centre.

In practice this means that the space for counter hegemonic struggles created by parliamentary democracy is not utilised and civil society is brought more firmly under the influence of capitalist ideology.

Cosatu, the RDP and social transformation

The struggles of committed and courageous anti-apartheid activists led to the decline of the apartheid state. If we are to avoid statism in post-apartheid South Africa, we need to take seriously the RDP's aim of democratising society as well as the state.

This will require giving all the organisations of civil society - trade unions, civics, women's organisations, youth and student organisations, churches and universities - a wider role in policy formulation and implementation. Extra resources and an expanded role will help civil organisations transform from being resistance movements to accepting co-responsibility for the country's reconstruction.

Strengthening the organs of civil society is the best way to avert the dangers of holistic blueprints that Popper warned against. It is also the best way of ensuring that the RDP is implemented in a democratic way through consultation with all South Africans.

In the next chapter we explore further the possibilities and limitations of achieving transformation within the confines of representative democracy and a capitalist state.



LABOUR AND THE TRANSITION ✓

In this chapter we debate the argument, proffered by transition theory, that any transition from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy necessarily involves compromises on economic democracy or egalitarianism.

The implications of this debate for the role of the labour movement in South African reconstruction are discussed, with particular reference to the possibility of some form of co-determination or social contract providing the basis for a transition to socialism - a goal Cosatu has always espoused.

The limits to transformation ✓

Our point of departure was from the body of work which in recent years sought to analyse the transition in South Africa within the framework set out by theorists of transition from authoritarian rule in Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Beyond simply describing the process of transition, the concern of certain political scientists is to understand the circumstances in which democratisation processes are 'successful'. Their assumptions include a particular understanding of democracy: one which is limited to 'political democracy' which consists of 'certain sets of rules and procedures, principally open elections and oppositional rights' (MacEwan 1988: 117).

While this is debatable at a theoretical level, what is significant is their conclusion that where such democratisation is successful, it is normally at the expense of socio-economic transformation: democratisation is weighed against 'socialisation' or 'social equalisation'.

They conclude that where political liberalisation and democratisation is 'consolidated', it precludes socio-economic transformation and usually involves a 'pact' or social contract in which, it is implied, the interests of the working class are necessarily compromised (Przeworski 1986, 1991; O'Donnell et al 1986).

Indeed, most transition theorists either assume or conclude that democracy - in its limited definition - and capitalist economic relations go hand in hand. Democracy correlates with wealth, and wealth can only be created by capitalism.

Thus market economics, private property, profit and capital accumulation are seen either as essential to democracy - as in Barrington-Moore's 1966 'no bourgeois, no democracy' - or as a 'necessary but not sufficient condition' for democracy, as Huntington argues (quoted in Allison 1994: 9-10).

Transition theory thus rests on a particularly narrow definition of democracy. Once democracy is limited purely to the political level, a transition is deemed complete when formal electoral and constitutional requirements are fulfilled. Moreover, any attempts to expand democracy beyond these limits are seen as a potential threat to the stability or consolidation of the democratic regime.

A second, related conclusion of transition theorists is that while the emergence of grassroots democratic structures in civil society is appropriate to a particular phase in the transition process - that of *apertura* or liberalisation - they cannot last beyond that phase if the pacted transition is to be successfully completed.

The pact essentially involves the working class - or other independent organs of civil society - being relegated to their 'proper place', which is within the boundaries of what is negotiated as being necessary for stability and economic growth within the framework of the market.

When political democratisation has been achieved, the masses are necessarily demobilised and participate in politics in the 'correct' way, which is by voting every few years for the legislature. But behind this conclusion is the notion that civil society has no fundamental effect on the transition process: that it is a process driven by elites who form the pacts and have access to the 'formal levers of political change'.

The problem with this analysis is not only the limited conception of democracy upon which it rests, but also its emphasis on process rather than content: an emphasis which assumes that class interests have little if any role to play in deciding outcomes.

To be fair, some transition theorists do concede that civil society may change outcomes. They argue, for instance, that a 'highly mobilised popular

upsurge' may at one stage bring down a dictatorship, but at another make 'subsequent democratic consolidation difficult' and even impossible - in other words, it may result in a counter coup and an even more authoritarian regime (O'Donnell et al 1986: 65).

The message here is not that civil society is unimportant, but that it must be careful not to endanger the democratisation process with its militancy. It is also argued that 'interim pacts' which assist in the consolidation of democracy in the short term may 'subsequently impede democratic consolidation if their restrictive rules and guarantees produce substantive disenchantment and procedural deadlock' (Ibid: 66).

Their conclusion from the above observation, therefore, is not to give more of a role to civil society in the transition process, but simply to state that transition is characterised by a 'high degree of uncertainty and indeterminacy' (Ibid).

It can be argued on the basis of our survey that, unlike in the above scenario where working class interests can be - and preferably are - 'pacted away' and 'normalised', the strength of civil society in South Africa will retain some of its influence in the political realm.

What then is the political role of the labour movement, as the strongest and most independent organ of civil society, in South Africa? If the 'pacted transition' consolidates successfully, will the Tripartite Alliance survive? Will the allegiance of workers to the Alliance prove stronger than their immediate class interest?

Other sectors of civil society, such as the South African National Civics Organisation, are already indicating the pattern of demobilisation predicted by transition theorists. But the labour movement may prove different.

Previous chapters have shown the fierce independence of the union movement and its commitment to a more radical and thorough form of democracy, not to mention its determination to use its considerable powers in the extra-parliamentary arena if the Government is not sufficiently sensitive to its material interests.

If we accept, for the moment, that democratisation in South Africa is taking place within the limits imposed by a capitalist social formation - in other words, if we accept a limited definition of democracy - what do transition theorists tell us about the success of such a class compromise in newly democratic societies?

A representative answer is given by Sheahan (1986: 157), who argues that there is tension inherent in the economic policies which must be followed in societies if they are to remain political democracies: they entail restraints and the limitation of claims, while at the same time they have to meet some expectations.

Key to economic policies is increasing employment while limiting wage demands. Yet he admits that 'social agreements on wage norms have been tried in Latin America and have consistently failed to work for any length of time'.

Nevertheless, Sheahan (1986: 154) does offer the hope that, in some cases, authoritarian systems will have done so much damage that domestic social groups might, at least initially, be more willing than historically they might otherwise have been to accept the compromises and restraints necessary to restore functioning democracies.

Given the findings of our survey, willingness to compromise in the hope that the new political democracy will be better than the former racial authoritarianism in its economic management is probably an accurate reflection of the labour movement's current position in South Africa. But what if policy tensions begin to affect the working class negatively?

Sheahan is optimistic that the possibility exists for economic growth in the capitalist system which benefits all sectors of society sufficiently to hold the democratic consensus together. He refers to this as 'shared growth'. But political democracy is no guarantee that such economic policies will be followed - and such economic policies by no means assure the stabilisation of political democracy.

Indeed, Sheahan is extremely tentative in his optimism: the best he can offer is that the 'special circumstances of escape from the drastic political repression of the past might...help to create a more durable consensus on the need for shared growth, as opposed to the antagonistic strategies which did so much to create explosive conditions in the past' (Ibid: 157).

Przeworski (1986: 63) is even more dispiriting about the prospects of economic growth occurring within stabilised political democracies. He argues that class compromise is necessary for the establishment and maintenance of capitalist democracies. This compromise entails that 'profits cannot fall so low as to threaten reproduction of capital, and wages cannot fall so low as to make profits appear as a particularist interest of capital'.

Such a compromise may find expression in a social pact that involves the labour movement agreeing to wage restraints in return for expanded employment opportunities and welfare measures. Yet such pacts are unlikely to succeed for any or all of three main reasons.

Firstly, such pacts are by definition narrow and the interests of organised labour may be played off against those of the 'masses'. Secondly, public sector workers have no vested interest in such a pact, and may in fact be threatened by it, which narrows it further. Lastly, both employers and governments are ambivalent towards strong trade unions, and it is only strong unions which will participate in such pacts (Przeworski 1991: 185).

What normally happens, therefore, is that governments begin to vacillate when faced with competing pressures from different sections of their support base and become increasingly authoritarian rather than more responsive to representative institutions, whether they are parliamentary institutions or organs of civil society such as trade unions (Ibid: 186-7).

Przeworski (1986: 63) goes on to argue that, in order to hold together a compromise, 'the typical democratising coalition is likely to adopt a Keynesian economic project'. As we are clearly seeing in South Africa, such a project involves a 'combination of private property, redistribution of income and a strong state'. But those kinds of policies, and the compromise on which they are based, are inherently fragile and usually of short duration.

Whether Keynesian policies result in wage increases being eroded by inflation and unemployment, as Przeworski argues, or whether wage restraints are imposed on the working class by the social contract, the likelihood is that the organisations which represent the working class politically - in our case the ANC and SACP - are in danger of losing their popular support.

Przeworski suggests, in effect, that such populist policies are better for building temporary coalitions - like the Tripartite Alliance - than at building stable democracies. He is thus forced to conclude that it seems as if 'an almost complete docility and patience on the part of organised workers is needed for a democratic transformation to succeed' (Ibid).

"We cannot avoid the possibility that a transition to democracy can be made only at the cost of leaving economic relations intact, not only the structure of production but even distribution of income."
(Przeworski 1986)

In other words, we are back at the conclusion that the choice is essentially between political democracy and economic equalisation. It is simply not possible for the poor and oppressed to have their cake and eat it. However, according to our survey, this is precisely what South African workers are determined to do.

It is useful at this point to make a distinction between theories of democratisation and theories of democracy. As Allison (1994: 8, 14) points out, theorists of democracy have recently tended towards what he calls an 'emancipationist' conception of democracy which is critical of limiting democracy to institutions such as regular elections.

On the other hand, the democratisation referred to by transition theorists entails what he calls a minimalist definition of democracy. For transition theorists of democratisation, as distinct from democracy, the 1980s were a triumph. For emancipationists, however, the same decade saw an increase in social and economic inequality combined with a decrease in political participation.

This is neatly illustrated by the 'well established paradox that the conditions for successful capitalism seem to provide the best possibilities for the maintenance of a stable electoral system, but to limit massively the range of choices which people can make under that system'.

Allison's conclusion - which is similar to that of transition theorists - is that if it is accepted that there is no 'true hybrid' between capitalist and command economic systems, the best that can be hoped for is that authoritarian states first foster capitalist social relations, and then allow for gradual democratisation at a later stage (Ibid: 23).

Those who accept a more radical, or emancipationist definition of democracy - akin to what Held would term 'participatory' - would argue that a truly democratic transition necessarily entails a fundamental restructuring of economic relations. These two approaches to democracy are reflected inside Cosatu.

✓ **Co-determination and working class power**

Cosatu's post-election congress came together under the banner of 'Reconstruction for Working Class Power' - confirming the intention of the labour movement to play a central role in reconstruction. The extent to which this will be realised depends largely on the institutional framework

through which co-determination of the reconstruction process is to be carried out.

The survey indicates support for two possible approaches to the role of the labour movement in reconstruction. Both share a vision of socialism as the product of popular mobilisation and struggles.

Firstly, there is an approach which suggests that a struggle on class lines within the ANC will push it in a socialist direction by encouraging radical or structural reform. The class content of representative democracy is downplayed in favour of an emphasis on its form.

The central idea is securing certain centres of power to allow the popular classes to subordinate the capitalist class to the logic of social needs. Mass based organisations in civil society are seen as a basis for pressing capital into realising a productive and expansive economy by limiting its prerogatives. The dilemma is how to combine militant mass action and the consensus politics that co-determination will demand.

The second approach believes the central task is to intensify the class struggle and give a socialist impetus to the discontent that is likely to arise with lack of fundamental change in post-apartheid South Africa.

While the proponents of this perspective accept that an immediate revolutionary transformation of South Africa is not on the cards, they insist that the foundation for a transition to socialism will not come from compromise and joint control but rather from increasing struggle by the popular masses. The formation of an independent workers' party is usually seen as an indispensable part of this struggle.

The 81% of our respondents who indicated their support for the Tripartite Alliance, and the 75% who indicated that they would continue to support the Alliance in the next election, indicate that a workers' party is unlikely to gain widespread worker support.

However, if needs are not met, living conditions deteriorate or the state becomes authoritarian, there could be backing for an ANC led radical project or, failing that, for an independent workers' party of the left.

But a militant workers' party would be no less subject to pressures to demobilise than other sectors of civil society. For example, the Brazilian Workers Party (PT: *Partido dos Trabalhadores*) has been criticised on precisely those grounds.

The PT, established in 1980 as an independent socialist oriented party with its origins in the trade union movement and strong grassroots community support, contested and lost the 1990 and 1994 presidential elections in Brazil. It has been argued that the PT, through its involvement in parliamentary politics, has gradually distanced itself from its radical grassroots politics of the past:

"The PT...has separated itself from the trade union movement and lost many of the characteristics of a mass party (for example: organised and active grassroots nuclei, party activity permanently linked to social movements, formalised internal democracy, an internal struggle centred on the comparison of programmes, and regular party congresses).

"Today it is closer to the model of a figurehead party: devoid of grassroots organisation, with only seasonal party activity, linked to elections." (Boito 1994: 15)

The prospect, therefore, is that even popular structures are destined to become increasingly isolated and disempowered. Alliance politics may amount to little more than a 'deracialisation' conceived by experts, enforced by the state and situated in the logic of the market:

"A Left bending over backwards to avoid chaos; a Left propitiating the powers that be; a Left that is nothing if not 'prudent': such...is the shrunken vision of transition to democracy that the realism of the epoch...would seek to fashion for us." (Saul 1994: 11).

Thus while the first approach appears to underestimate the real limitations of tripartite policy formulation and operates on an unduly narrow definition of democracy, the second approach overemphasises the corrupting or anti-democratic potential of tripartitism and overlooks the Alliance's real potential for stimulating radical change.

If Przeworski (1991) is correct, the new Government will seek to bolster the reformism of the first approach (the left centre of the Alliance) at the expense of the more revolutionary approach (the left wing). But the survey results raise questions about the ability of the state and capital to subordinate the interests of Cosatu members in this manner.

Nevertheless, it is precisely the strength of a parliamentary democracy to present the state as a neutral institution which can be occupied and steered in the direction dictated by the policies of the majority party.

While class conflict can never be wholly contained within the parameters of the institutions of parliamentary democracy, liberal democracies provide the opportunity to channel industrial conflict into 'legitimate' institutions and to impose austerity measures to limit working class demands.

An emphasis on state intervention to make the system more efficient, and a commitment to gradual reform, may therefore serve to maintain the Alliance in office while denying it real power.

The survey clearly reveals that most respondents are prepared to engage in collective action to ensure that the Government makes good on its promises. The real dilemma thus arises when a balance between short term goals and long term transformation has to be established.

How are the setbacks of short to medium term objectives - consensus politics, compromise, increasing incorporation etc - going to be overcome in order to sustain the long term aim of transformation?

Before exploring that issue in the final chapter, it is necessary to explore the impact of the April 1994 elections on Cosatu.



COSATU AND THE ELECTIONS

This chapter analyses the nature and extent of Cosatu's involvement in the ANC's election campaign, and its impact on the federation's organisational structures and resources. It is based on interviews with union officials and gives voice to their views. The chapter concludes by looking at the challenges and issues facing the country's biggest and most influential union federation in the post-election period and beyond.

Debates in Cosatu on the relationship between it and the ANC did not start with the election campaign. In the 1980s one of the major debates in unions was the relationship between unions and politics. At Cosatu's 1987 National Congress an uneasy consensus was reached by the major tendencies in the federation when they adopted the Freedom Charter and acknowledged that unions had a role in politics.

The importance of this accommodation among the tendencies was twofold. Firstly, it laid the basis for what was to become the Tripartite Alliance. Secondly, it formed what was to become a consensus position when Cosatu's structures were debating whether or not to support the ANC in the elections.

Thus when the time arrived for Cosatu to take a decision, the key question was not whether or not to back the ANC but how to do it in a way that benefited Cosatu and its members. For this reason Cosatu's involvement in the election campaign was not just a matter of backing the ANC: it was a series of different but related interventions.

Cosatu's interventions

There were three separate but related interventions by Cosatu in the 1994 elections: the RDP, union candidates on ANC lists, and voter education and canvassing for an ANC victory.

□ The RDP

The RDP was the brainchild of Cosatu. It was initially conceived of as a pact to be signed between the ANC and Cosatu with the objective of

binding the ANC to specific agreements in return for which the federation would undertake to deliver votes for the ANC. However, as discussion deepened it was felt that such a programme should go beyond just the ANC and Cosatu and be a unifying plan also including civil society and other parties and organisations.

The RDP formed the basis of the ANC's election manifesto and has been used to engage many other forces, including business, in debates about the economy and the future.

As an intervention the RDP enabled Cosatu to gain maximum benefit from the Alliance, so that it did not end with delivering votes for the ANC. It has also allowed Cosatu to hold the new Government to the plan, and provided a yardstick by which to measure its performance.

□ Candidates on ANC lists

After the announcement of the first 20 union candidates in September 1993, many more Cosatu leaders were nominated to stand as ANC candidates for regional parliaments.

Since the election, many more unionists have been nominated to serve on interim local government structures. With local government elections due in late 1995, the number of unionists in local government is likely to increase even further.

As early as May 1992 Cosatu was already considering the party candidates option. Cosatu's national negotiations coordinator, Jayendra Naidoo, explained at the time:

"Cosatu will not contest the elections. However, the Central Executive Committee has discussed releasing people from the leadership of Cosatu to be available to stand for election to the Constituent Assembly on an ANC platform if we are approached by them." (*South African Labour Bulletin*, May 16, 1992)

Having union leaders in government offered a number of opportunities to Cosatu and the labour movement. Firstly, people trusted by workers would occupy key policy making institutions at all levels of government. Secondly, for the first time workers would have access to sympathetic decision makers, many of whom ought to feel obliged to keep unions informed about discussions in decision making structures. Finally, union nominees would understand the concerns and aspirations of workers.

Union nominees come from a tradition which respects principles of accountability, particularly mandates and report backs. Prominent union candidate and former Cosatu general secretary, Jay Naidoo, indicated publicly that he would seriously consider resigning his seat if the new Government became unaccountable or deliberately failed to honour the RDP and worker rights.

❑ Voter education and canvassing

The decision to do voter education and canvass voters for an ANC victory flowed from the other elements of Cosatu's intervention. It offered a number of opportunities to Cosatu.

Union leaders were able to re-establish contact with members through factory general meetings, workers' forums and other meetings. This was important, particularly in view of the fact that leaders had publicly acknowledged a gap between leadership and rank and file members.

McVicar Dyasopu, CWIU official in Port Elizabeth, admitted that in 1993 the union structures were 'seriously collapsing'. After the union and Cosatu embarked on the election campaign, he said, there was a noticeable improvement in attendance at union meetings, particularly in shop stewards' attendance of locals.

In Durban former Cosatu regional chairman Samuel Mthethwa, now a member of the regional assembly, pointed to the establishment of a new Cosatu local in Tongaat as one of the gains the federation made out of the campaign. Clearly involvement in the campaign offered Cosatu an opportunity to recruit new members, mobilise old members and revitalise its structures.

It is important to make certain general observations regarding Cosatu and the elections. By participating in the election campaign Cosatu was able to bring its solid track record of struggle to bear as a key determinant of the election outcome.

The federation was visible throughout the transition - for example with its anti-VAT strike in 1991 and Chris Hani stayaways in 1993 - and was instrumental in using mass action to unlock the transition process when it seemed to stall, for example with rolling mass action in 1992.

Of all the parties contesting the election the ANC was the only one to be supported by a strong, mass based organisation like Cosatu. This

not only influenced the election result but also made it very difficult for the ANC to sideline the federation after the elections. The ANC still needs Cosatu's support to succeed in implementing its plans.

Finally, it is important to note that Cosatu's decision to support the ANC was taken unanimously. No splits or major divisions were occasioned by the decision in the federation or among any of its affiliates. On the contrary the campaign served to cement the federation.

'Cosatu had no choice,' said CWIU's national education officer and assistant election coordinator, Chris Bonner: 'It would have been very difficult to stand back.'

The election's impact on Cosatu

❑ Members and structures

From the start of voter education activities in late 1993, the campaign enabled Cosatu and its affiliates to reach thousands of members. The effect was that many members were mobilised and their interest in union activities revived, at least temporarily.

The Eastern Cape seemed to be the region where unions were most successful in mobilising members around the elections. A series of workers' forums were held throughout the region. Attendance was generally good.

According to Vo Tyibilika, Cosatu's regional secretary, so successful were the forums in the region that they began to raise the issue of solidarity. He gave the Sappi strike in March as a case in point.

Tyibilika said forums were also instrumental in orchestrating mass actions to push employers to accept demands around voter education.

Numsa's national organiser, Gavin Hartford, who is based in the Eastern Cape, agreed that the election campaign led to important improvements in union structures. He gave the example of Numsa's Uitenhage local, which had collapsed but was resuscitated as a result of workers' involvement in the campaign.

Many other union leaders and officials also reported noticeable improvements in union structures. Some, like the South African

Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) in Durban and Saccawu in Cape Town, also claimed to have recruited new members as a result of mobilisation.

However, most unionists admitted that the process of involving workers and mobilising was slow. The biggest gain recorded was that of Sadtu in Southern Natal, which claimed to have recruited about 12 000 new teachers from late in 1993 to early March 1994.

In general, two points can be made about the effect of the campaign on membership and structures. The one is that the mobilisation achieved in the campaign did not translate into large membership gains for most unions. Even the exceptional Sadtu achievement seemed more the result of the collapse of the homelands than of the election campaign.

The second point is that the campaign did not positively impact on union structures in general. Cases where there have been improvements are few and far between.

Even where there have been notable improvements in structures, it is doubtful that they can be sustained because the causes of the earlier collapse of structures have not been resolved.

□ Servicing members

There is no doubt that union activities, particularly servicing members, were adversely affected by the election campaign. Every union released at least one full-time official and some shop stewards in each region, and even some at national level to work on elections.

In addition some unions, like PPWAWU in the Eastern Cape, instructed their officials to canvass in between their normal union work. Former Cosatu Western Cape regional secretary and regional assembly member, Jonathan Arendse, acknowledged that unions had to postpone 'non-essential union work' because of the elections.

Post and Telecommunications Workers Association (Potwa) Eastern Cape regional secretary, Mxolisi Mashwabane, said his union found it difficult to cope with union work:

"The Cosatu resolution said that officials must focus on the campaign. We have been attending and addressing workers' forums. Partially day to day issues have not been taken up as before.

"For example, some hearings (of members at factories) are not attended, some management meetings are not attended and we are not being in touch as usual. It is a problem, particularly in unions with few staff in big regions. It has been very difficult to cope."

Gaps also appeared in shop stewards activities as a result of secondment to the elections. On the shop floor shop stewards attended to day to day grievances and cases before union officials intervened. They were part of unions' servicing machinery. Themba Mfeka, PPWAWU's assistant general secretary, explained the problem:

"Shop stewards are influential people in union structures. So this secondment had a negative impact in union structures."

Unionists seconded to the election effort with the ANC, Cosatu election teams, Independent Electoral Commission etc, ranged from shop stewards to local organisers, administrators, regional secretaries, education officers and even general secretaries.

Others who occupied similar positions are now elected representatives in central and regional governments. Unionists saw the campaign as a once off event and believed it to be a worthwhile sacrifice.

❑ **The leadership drain**

About 60 Cosatu leaders left during the elections to become members of the National Assembly and provincial legislatures. While the problem was highlighted by the departure of scores of union leaders to government, the 'brain drain' has been happening for some years.

Since the late 1980s unions have been losing full-time staff through resignations. In the 1990s this trend accelerated as more opportunities opened up in other areas. At a time when Cosatu and its unions needed to build the capacity to handle new and complex issues, unions continued losing experienced and skilled people.

Numsa's general secretary, Enoch Godongwana, noted that a number of organisers and shop stewards had gone into management. The concern was that his union had put 'a lot of effort' into training those people.

Officials interviewed suggested that established union leaders were leaving for several reasons, including:

- ☞ Greener pastures
- ☞ Greater family responsibilities
- ☞ Management poaching
- ☞ Loss of vision.

Although low remuneration and poor working conditions were a major cause of the exodus, some unionists argued that a number of other factors also caused officials to leave. Gavin Hartford of Numsa argued that part of the problem was that there were no career paths for union officials. He correctly predicted that after the election the trend of people leaving unions would accelerate. He pointed out:

“After the elections union officials will be in the market. There will be affirmative action and many people will be looking for clever guys with black faces.”

Chris Bonner added that:

“Some people have been around for too long. Suddenly new opportunities, new avenues have appeared.”

This highlights the impact of transition in a society moving away from racism and minority rule. Unions were one of the few areas of employment which fell outside the control of the apartheid state and management, where people could feel proud of their work. Many of those who chose to work in unions did not do so because it was a career choice but because it was part of ‘the struggle’.

Now that there is democracy and deracialisation of society, and some affirmative action in management, many unionists are looking for jobs with career paths and salaries which will enable them to better provide for their families.

It is clear that the civil service is now a legitimate structure in the eyes of activists. Those who have been offered key jobs in the civil service have rarely turned them down. Cosatu officials have entered key civil service jobs, and some have followed their leaders into government.

The leadership drain is not only at the level of full-time union officials. There is a clear trend of shop stewards leaving union positions or leaving unions altogether to take up higher positions, particularly managerial

positions in personnel and human resource departments, but also as supervisors and production technicians.

Affirmative action has made the issue of shop stewards leaving unions even more serious. In many cases shop stewards come from the better educated ranks of the work force. Shop stewards are often the most eligible candidates for affirmative action in the workplace.

The election

Cosatu regional leaders were generally confident that most of their members voted for the ANC. This is corroborated by our survey.

However, in the Western Cape the survey showed a significant National Party presence in Cosatu ranks. Elias Maboe, a Sactwu shop steward seconded full-time to the regional elections team, carried out voter education and canvassing in the region. He said many coloured workers, particularly in his union, said they voted for the National Party for the following reasons:

- ☞ They believed that the ANC was behind the violence in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng and that if they voted for the ANC violence would occur in their region.
- ☞ They feared affirmative action and believed Africans would take over their jobs. This fear was exacerbated by some employers telling workers that they would no longer employ coloureds because jobs would be open for Africans only.
- ☞ Many coloured workers feared that once the ANC was in power Africans would take away their houses. They quoted events in Delft, Tafelsig and Hanover Park in 1993, in which new houses built for coloured people were forcibly occupied by Africans.
- ☞ There was fear that the ANC would take away workers' pensions and provident funds once it was in government. At some stage the rumour was so serious that President Mandela had to issue a statement explaining that that would not happen.
- ☞ Many workers also feared the SACP, which they believed was using the ANC to take over the country. Their concern was that once communists had taken over they would ban religion.

Another contested region was KwaZulu-Natal, where Cosatu leaders were confident that most of their members voted for the ANC. Paulos Ngcobo, Cosatu's Southern Natal regional secretary, felt the federation was pivotal to the ANC campaign in the province.

“The ANC would not be able to win on its own in this region. In Southern Natal and the Natal Midlands it is mainly Cosatu people who initiate and organise, like the big march on March 25 in Durban. The Tripartite Alliance in Southern Natal is weak. We decided to take the campaign upon ourselves.”

Cosatu leaders also believed that workers took their advice to vote for the ANC because Cosatu was effective in defending workers and because the RDP provided for the protection of worker rights and interests.

All unions carried out intensive voter education in and outside the work place. Thousands of shop stewards were trained as voter educators and hundreds of thousands of workers were reached by trainers or independent voter education agencies.

However, all unions complained that they were unable to reach all workers because many employers were reluctant to allow shop stewards or workers to be trained during working time.

Employers were even more opposed to canvassing in workplaces by Cosatu or ANC representatives. In many instances Cosatu representatives went into factories on the pretext that they were going to do voter education while in reality they did canvassing for the ANC.

Interestingly, Cosatu felt it had to canvass the votes of its members even though its special congress decided to back the ANC. Jonathan Arendse explained:

“We are aware that factories are contested terrains. That is why we go around and explain to our members why Cosatu supports the ANC. We are not forcing our members to vote for the ANC.”

Cosatu did not focus its canvassing only on its own members. Canvassers also targeted non-union members and people in communities where they lived. Cosatu's participation in door to door canvassing was particularly interesting, especially in the Western Cape. In that province the federation transformed its locals - industrial locals and the joint shop stewards local - into canvassing machines. Shop stewards met for about 45 minutes

to get briefings and were then transported to communities identified by the ANC for door to door blitzes.

Elias Maboe said the exercise successfully exposed people to the views of Cosatu and the ANC. He reported that out of every 80 houses visited, Cosatu canvassers were turned away at only about four. Arendse said the National Party was the ANC's strongest rival in the region and therefore 'our strongest weapon is personal contact'.

In the Western Cape, Cosatu canvassing augmented that of the ANC. Jesse Maluleka, Cosatu's national elections coordinator, believed it was very important for the federation:

"We were saying to our members that participation in the door to door blitzes should not simply be as individual workers who join the ANC as volunteers, but as part of organised groups from Cosatu."

Factory general meetings were used as a platform for canvassing, as well as workers' forums where speakers explained the reasons for supporting the ANC and were questioned by workers.

Hundreds of forums were held throughout the country. Their format differed between regions. The forums started in Gauteng, where high profile candidates like Nelson Mandela and Jay Naidoo addressed thousands of shop stewards and workers at a time.

The questions that workers put to speakers at workers' forums showed clearly how most workers would judge the performance of the ANC after the election. They ranged from jobs, affirmative action, housing, training and wages to the use of police in strikes.

Accountability of union candidates

It is important to reflect on how leaders who remain in Cosatu see the issue of the accountability of parliamentary candidates. When nominating Cosatu leaders to ANC lists was first mooted in 1992, Jayendra Naidoo explained that the federation envisaged a situation where unionists would become ANC candidates 'but they'll have a sort of ambiguous dual accountability'.

However, it seems the debate was never taken beyond that point. Interviews with regional leaders revealed that no mechanism for collective or individual

accountability by candidates had been worked out by the federation. Each Cosatu leader and each candidate expressed individual opinions rather than agreed policy on the matter.

No ideas have emerged on the form of the relationship between labour parliamentarians and the federation.

The future

From the above discussion a number of conclusions can be made, many of which have a bearing on the future.

The first is that while Cosatu made some organisational and political gains out of its involvement in the election campaign, it emerged weaker after the elections. Whatever gains it made were heavily outweighed by three main factors: internal organisational problems, loss of key leaders and difficulty adapting to the challenges of democracy. Lack of leadership and capacity could limit the federation's ability to consolidate its base and prepare for the challenges of the future.

Secondly, Cosatu will be called on to make sacrifices - particularly with regard to wages and mass action - to ensure that resources are used in ways which benefit underprivileged sectors. The call by ANC leaders to striking public sector workers to end mass action, however valid the reasons, could become a precedent for similar calls in the future.

The views of regional leaders are divided on the issue. But most leaders tended towards a position which accepted making sacrifices provided there was transparency in the way government decisions were taken and implemented. Shaun Pather, a Sadtu member in Durban, explained the conditions under which calls for sacrifices would be heeded:

"Last year the Government's offer of a 5% increase to civil servants was not accepted by our members because there is a lot of mismanagement and corruption under the present (now former) Government.

"But in future 5% may be accepted if the rest of the money goes towards the RDP, for example building more classrooms. Sadtu leaders will be able to convince members to make sacrifices as long as the sacrifices are reasonable and government is transparent."

Thirdly, the relationship with the new ANC Government is likely to be cooperative but tense. Many leaders of Cosatu expressed the view that an ANC government would be more sympathetic to the needs and interests of workers.

Without a clear mechanism of accountability the position of labour parliamentarians may become very difficult if tension between unions and the Government brings them into head-on confrontation with their constituency.

The relationship could get more complicated by Cosatu officials entering the civil service: they would automatically become the employers of Cosatu members in the public sector.

While it was difficult to predict accurately relationships after the election, many Cosatu shop stewards and officials believed that if the Government failed to deliver - especially on worker rights and the RDP - it would be their right as an independent organisation to resort to mass action.

Many repeated verbatim President Mandela's closing remark when he opened Cosatu's special congress in September last year:

"If an ANC Government fails to deliver, you must do to it exactly what you did to the government of De Klerk."

Fourthly, there was a sharp division of views on what should happen to the Alliance after the election. It appeared that once the election was over leaders would begin to take stock of their organisational capacities, and the argument for scaling down the Alliance into a relationship based on concrete issues would win the day. If that scenario materialises, the RDP and worker rights could become central issues in the relationship.

Fifthly, there was no doubt among union leaders that democratisation of the state would have a tremendous influence on industrial relations. There are signs that employers are aware of this.

Faced with global competition and pressure from the new Government to introduce meaningful changes, some employers have started experimenting with approaches towards less confrontational and more cooperative relationships with employees.

Examples are the introduction of worker participation, affirmative action and training programmes on the shop floor by a number of companies.

Cosatu and its affiliates have been poorly prepared for this. According to Chris Bonner:

"Cosatu is facing a crisis because it is not dealing with major happenings on the shop floor. Organisers are not coping with new shop floor issues, they just run away from them."

Of course cooperation will not do away with conflict. But what could happen is that lack of capacity and strategic thinking could make the use of conflict an attractive option for some because it has worked for them in the past.

Finally, prospects for trade union unity continued to improve after the election. There are a number of factors propelling the three main federations - Cosatu, the National Council of Trade Unions (Nactu) and the Federation of South African Labour Unions (Fedsal) - towards unity, namely:

- ☞ All federations need to redefine their alliances with political parties. This will lead to a reduction of political involvement.
- ☞ More emphasis will be put on issues of common concern - jobs, training, capacity building and common proposals to Nedlac.

There are already strong signals that cooperation among the federations will continue to grow.

This chapter has attempted to understand the nature and impact of Cosatu's involvement in the elections, which was undoubtedly an historic intervention which offered many opportunities for South Africa's largest union federation.

However, Cosatu still faces serious organisational problems, has lost key leaders to Parliament and is strategically ill prepared for the new era of democracy. Thus the federation is at the crossroads. The crisis it is facing threatens to deprive Cosatu of opportunities it has helped create for itself and its members.

Since the elections, Cosatu and its affiliates have asserted the need to 'go back to basics' and begin addressing organisational weaknesses. Usually this term is taken to mean going back to the strategies the unions used in the past to build their strength.

This is a positive sign, except that it assumes that the context remains static. The reality is that the circumstances in which unions organise have changed since April 27, 1994. The implications of the new circumstances will be explored in the last chapter.



TAKING DEMOCRACY SERIOUSLY

At first glance it would appear that the transition unfolding in South Africa conforms to the prognoses of transition theory.

The transition from authoritarian rule to democracy is effected through a process of elite pacting in which reformers in the state and moderates in the democratic opposition negotiate a form of representative democracy which essentially conserves the pillars of a capitalist order.

This conservative outcome is essentially attributable to the fact that neither the state nor its democratic opposition are able to impose their will on the other without inducing a level of chaos that is unacceptable to each.

Thus the notion of democracy articulated by transition theory represents a compromise that holds few prospects for a more radical form of participation than is typically encountered in liberal, representative democratic systems. Put differently, it is a form of democracy that does not extend beyond the realm of parliamentary politics.

A case can clearly be made for viewing deputy president FW De Klerk's faction in the National Party as having a reformist bent while the alliance between the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu has been committed to a moderate path of negotiating the demise of apartheid.

It is also reasonable to conclude that neither the former South African Defence Force nor the armed formations in the democratic movement were able to achieve their respective objectives of suppressing resistance to apartheid, and of unilaterally seizing power, without plunging the country into Bosnian type civil war.

The apartheid order was thus dismantled - in line with the 'model' of transition - without engendering the chaos predicted by the numerous prophets of doom who, prior to the onset of negotiations, were convinced that any attempt to wrestle power away from the apartheid regime would trigger resistance and counter resistance that would end in the destruction of all.

It is equally clear that the form of democracy established on the basis of the Interim Constitution does accord closely with the form of limited representative democracy identified in transition theory.

Thus while few could gainsay the fact that real democratic progress has been made in the past few years, we must question whether this particular form of democracy will prove capable of resolving the conflicts that persist in civil society, and of satisfying the aspirations of ordinary people demanding a say in the running of the new South Africa.

In particular, the question arises as to whether this new democratic form can accommodate the demands emanating from civil society for greater equality at the social, economic and political levels.

There are, of course, those who would argue that the *bourgeois* state, whatever its form, is inherently incapable of meeting either the democratic aspirations of the working class, narrowly defined, or of civil society.

The claim is that *bourgeois* states exist essentially to buttress the power of classes whose material interests lie in excluding workers and the masses from critical decision making processes and otherwise limiting their demands to those consistent with the ruling interests.

In short the argument is that any form of *bourgeois* democracy is inherently incapable of meeting popular aspirations, and that even to work with it is to risk drawing the working classes into political practices that involve unacceptable compromises of their interests. From this perspective, the road to democracy lies in the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society.

In our view - whatever the theoretical merits of the above argument - the radical scenario for the future of South Africa is unlikely to materialise. In the first place our data tend to suggest that organised workers are thus far willing to participate in parliamentary politics and evince no significant desire to embark on the kind of politics that would usher in a socialist order of the kind described.

Moreover, the Government of National Unity appears willing to deploy forces of law and order against worker militancy as was demonstrated in the strike wave and blockades in mid-1994. In addition, our reading of the current international environment suggests that the major powers would use all means at their disposal to prevent South Africa's workers from effecting a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order.

Contemporary democratic movements have the misfortune of entering the state when notions of alternative societies have vanished. The collapse of Stalinist societies in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the bankruptcy of social democracy in Western Europe has transformed the international climate, delegitimising radical notions of democracy and social change.

This has reinforced the apparent intellectual hegemony of liberal democracy and the free market - the 'limited democracy' favoured by transition theorists. It has opened up a gap between expectations developed by workers during the struggle against apartheid and the reality of the form of parliamentary democracy under a Government of National Unity. The findings from our survey illustrate this argument.

The vast majority of respondents subscribe to the notion of direct participatory democracy in the workplace, where they see their elected representative, the shop steward, as directly accountable to them. With this bottom up notion of democracy, most are firmly of the view that parliamentary democracy should be substantially the same and must consist of the following principles and practices:

- ☞ Members of Parliament must report back every time they make decisions in Parliament that affect their supporters.
- ☞ If Members of Parliament do not do what their supporters want, they should be recalled.
- ☞ If the new Government fails to deliver, workers will participate in mass action to force the Government to deliver on its promises.

More significantly, there are growing signs of a 'democratic rupture' between leaders drawn into corporatist structures and rank and file members. We have entered a phase of parliamentary democracy in which the elected majority will have a relatively free hand to govern the country even if it means abandoning its election manifesto.

Our respondents, on the other hand, appear to be committed to a different notion of democracy: they tend to view democracy as a continuing process of decision making that all people affected should actively engage in.

In a democratic South Africa class contradictions are coming sharply to the fore as the Government of National Unity embarks upon the task of national development. The pressure on unions to identify with the goals of national development as defined by political leaders is considerable.

In post-colonial Africa, governments have expected unions to play a dualistic role: firstly, that of sacrificing their narrow sectional interests to the overall demands of national development and, secondly, representing the job interests of rank and file members.

The argument for the reversal of the primary role of unions to be developmental rather than representational has been based on the belief that trade unions represent a small and privileged proportion of Africa's labour force. As a World Bank report recently argued:

“...increased union activity raised African real wages in the formal sector by about 15% above what they otherwise would have been from 1979 to 1990.

“The evidence is clear that higher wages have led to lower demand for labour - although the magnitude of this effect remains in dispute...in the absence of the 15% induced increase, formal African employment would have been 200 000 to 400 000 above the present level of about five million.” (World Bank 1994: 7)

The study concludes that unions have contributed to slowing down the overall rate of economic growth.

Perhaps even more significant was the response of President Nelson Mandela and the Government of National Unity towards the 1994 wave of strikes in the retail industry: it was said that picketing created an environment which jeopardised foreign investment and in this sense put sectional interests of the working class ahead of national interest (*Sunday Times* July 24, 1994).

Similarly, a six week strike in the motor industry was effectively collapsed by the Government when it announced a reduction in tariffs on car imports, thereby immediately undercutting workers' outstanding pay claims.

Union-state relationships

Robin Cohen (1974) has tried to capture various union-state relationships in post-Colonial Africa by identifying four specific types of relationships. The first and most common involves an attempt to subordinate unions to the interests of government, where unions are expected to discipline their members to facilitate increases in productivity.

The second type of relationship is a partnership between unions and the state, in which unions retain their independence but cooperate closely with government. In this relationship unions attempt to combine their right to collective bargaining with the goals of national development.

A third type is one in which the union movement retains its independence from government and becomes an ally of the opposition. This leads to conflict with the government and the union emerges as an alternative locus of power.

A final scenario is one in which the union movement is independent but remains non-aligned politically. The government tolerates this independence because unions confine themselves to collective bargaining and do not engage in political activity.

The strength of the labour movement, and the deep commitment to union democracy revealed in our survey, makes the first option of union subordination to the state unlikely. Before he became Minister of Labour, Tito Mboweni acknowledged the temptation of government to subordinate the trade union movement in post-colonial Africa. But, he argued:

"This temptation can best be avoided through the development of methods and institutions which seek to increase mutual cooperation and joint programmes whilst insuring the independence of the trade unions and other organs of civil society." (Mboweni 1992: 28)

Clearly his approach points towards the second option, that of a partnership between an independent union movement and the state. This partnership is most visible in the RDP, in which the underlying idea is that social movements such as trade unions, civics, youth and student organisations, and associations of the unemployed and the aged, would all be part of an organised pact to reconstruct society.

"The democratic government, the trade union movement, business associations and relevant organisation of civil society must cooperate in formulating economic policy." (ANC 1994: 81).

But the constraints on the new Government are considerable. There are constraints from business and international agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to follow structural adjustment policies and reduce the social wage (through reduced expenditure on social welfare), weakened wage setting arrangements (including trade union rights), and enforced *laissez faire* market systems.

Attempts to forge social consensus, to prevent the flight of capital and scarce skills, and to encourage foreign investment are pressurising the new Government to limit its redistributive efforts. The Government is likely to be long on promises but unable to meet all its commitments in the short term at least.

In short, it is not difficult to imagine the Government expecting workers to sacrifice their 'narrow interests' to the demands of nation building and development on the grounds that workers represent a small and privileged proportion of the population. The Government might even enlist trade union leaders to restrain their members. This will open up conflict inside the labour movement between rank and file members and leaders, and place considerable strain on the partnership option.

The dilemma for the Government is whether to try and accommodate organised labour and become a state in which the concerns of labour predominate, or to allow the interests of capital to dominate, accepting the inevitability of a labour dominated socialist opposition.

This option - the third in Cohen's typology - involves unions entering into sharp conflict with the Government and becoming alternative loci of power. This is unlikely since our survey points towards a commitment to the ANC led Alliance not only in the April 1994 elections but also in the election scheduled for 1999.

The fourth option suggested by Cohen is for the labour movement to become completely independent of political parties, in the interests of forging a united trade union movement. In terms of this scenario Cosatu, Nactu, Fedsal and other trade union groupings would merge and labour would decide to concentrate on 'pure and simple' trade unionism.

This option is attractive and substantial progress has been made since the election on unity between the trade union groupings. However, the problem raised by collective bargaining unionism is that its exclusive focus on workplace issues is likely to accelerate divisions between unionised and non-unionised workers, employed and unemployed.

Research on the labour market points to a growing stratification of the black labour force, and in particular the emergence of a skilled stratum of African workers (Crankshaw and Hindson 1990). This creates the real possibility of an increasingly divided African work force and a growing divide between a well paid unionised work force and a stratum of rural and urban poor.

Given these structural trends, unions face a choice: should they prioritise the narrow interests of their members or do they continue to try to combine workplace issues with broader developmental issues faced by labour in a developing society?

By attempting to combine workplace issues with wider community and political issues, Cosatu has already established a form of unionism which challenges the traditional division of labour between union and politics - a form of unionism that has been described social movement unionism.

This form of unionism points towards a scenario not foreseen in Cohen's typology of relations between union and state: a possibility that Cosatu could become a radical pressure within the Alliance in the form of a left or socialist bloc that could propel the Government towards redistributive policies by mobilising pressure from civil society, communities and the workplace.

The first signs of such a development emerged in the wave of strikes in July 1994, when Cosatu general secretary Sam Shilowa denied that the strikes were a battle against the ANC. He said the wave of industrial action was aimed at reinforcing the ANC's hand to bring about change.

By initiating and committing itself to the RDP, Cosatu has made clear its commitment to broad national goals. What Sam Shilowa was pointing to was the need for Cosatu to imprint workers' demands on national development.

In this way, the possibility of deepening democracy by operating as a left pressure within the Alliance holds open the prospect that democracy in South Africa might transcend the conservative limits predicted by leading exponents of transition theory.

It will be difficult but not impossible for the labour movement to remain in the Alliance but not be coopted, and to neither alienate itself from its base nor lose its militancy. For this possibility to be realised two conditions are necessary.

Firstly, unions will have to shift from the antagonism that previously characterised their relations with the state to a closer working relationship with their allies in Parliament and the new Government. A priority will be legislation that enables management and labour to genuinely co-determine decisions in the workplace. A first step in this direction was taken in early 1995 when the Draft Labour Relations Bill was tabled.

The Bill introduces, through the concept of workplace forums, co-determination in the workplace.

Democracy, for our respondents, is not confined to periodic elections but is a direct means of empowering both unionised and non-unionised sectors of the working class within and beyond the factory gates. Because the civics, women's movements, youth and unemployed are the weakest, the poorest and the most marginalised, they will experience difficulty in developing their organisational capacity.

If these organisations are to participate meaningfully in shaping social and economic policy in bodies such as Nedlac, the development of their capacity will have to become a priority for the RDP and departments such as Labour.

The second condition required for a deepening of democracy is, in the words of Paul Hirst, 'a programme of reform that would supplement and extend rather than destroy representative democracy' (Hirst 1993: 116). In our view, this would require integrating the principles and practices of direct participatory democracy with indirect parliamentary democracy.

Although it is unrealistic to run a modern industrial state through the principles of direct participatory democracy, it is clear that any programme of parliamentary reform must take seriously the practices and experiences of the mass movements that emerged in the 1980s, and especially of the labour movement.

Mechanisms must be found to ensure that the direct will of the electorate is expressed in Parliament and that parliamentary representatives are made more accountable to the electorate. In Przeworski's words:

"If democracy is to be consolidated, that is, if all political forces are to learn to channel their demands and organise their conflicts within the framework of democratic institutions, these institutions must play a real role in shaping and implementing policies that influence living conditions." (Przeworski 1995: 216)

This study has been concerned with identifying the expectations of workers at the advent of parliamentary democracy. Our next survey, to be conducted in 1996, will examine how far these expectations have changed and been fulfilled, and the extent to which Parliament and the Government have succeeded in 'shaping and implementing policies that influence living conditions'.



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Although unions are widely recognised as key actors in the transition to democracy in South Africa, remarkably little research has been done on their expectations. This book reports on the findings of a nationwide survey, conducted in April 1994, into worker expectations of democracy. It is the first in a three-part study. The second survey will be conducted in 1996 and the third in 1998.

The pioneering study argues that a gap has opened up between worker expectations developed during the struggle against apartheid and the particular form of representative parliamentary democracy under the Government of National Unity.

The majority of respondents subscribed to a vision of direct participatory democracy in the workplace - accountability, report back and recall. Most were firmly of the view that parliamentary democracy should be substantially the same. Members of Parliament must report back regularly. If they do not, they should be recalled. And if the Government fails to deliver, workers will participate in mass action.

More disturbingly, there are growing signs of a 'democratic rupture' between union leaders drawn into corporatist structures and rank and file members.

The authors conclude that the Congress of South African Trade Unions is likely to emerge as a left pressure in its alliance with the African National Congress. But two conditions are necessary if the alliance is to survive. Firstly, unions will have to shift from the anti-corporatism that characterised their relations with the apartheid state to a closer working relationship with their allies in Parliament and in the Government. Secondly, there will have to be a programme that supplements and extends rather than destroys, representative parliamentary democracy.

This will require integrating the principles and practices of direct participatory democracy with indirect parliamentary democracy. In this way, South Africa will be *Taking Democracy Seriously*.

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