

**CLASS, CONSCIOUSNESS AND CONFLICT IN THE**  
**NATAL MIDLANDS, 1940-1987:**  
**THE CASE OF THE B.T.R. SARMCOL WORKERS.**

by  
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**UNDERTAKING**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original  
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## INTRODUCTION

### **BACKGROUND TO THE THESIS**

On May 1 1985 the 1000 workers at B.T.R. Sarmcol laid down their tools and went out on a legal strike. They were demanding recognition for their union - Metal and Allied Workers Union. That day they went off to celebrate May Day with their fellow workers and FOSATU comrades in the Pietermaritzburg region. They were jubilantly singing "We have built the country by fighting" (LMG, 1985:89) as they entered the Lay Ecumenical Center in Pietermaritzburg. Two days later they were fired. And so began one of the longest strikes in South Africa's history.

My first contact and involvement with the Sarmcol workers was when the strike was only a few weeks old. This involvement arose from a commitment to working class struggle rather than from any academic impulse of interest in the rubber industry or male workers. My research emanated later as a result of continuous interaction and informal discussions with the workers. This process of "intellectual awakening" is outlined below.

It seemed that as a result of these experiences the Sarmcol workers had come to a common understanding of the world. And it was this understanding which united them in their present trials and tribulations. In trying to understand this common understanding or consciousness I came to ask a number of questions. It seemed that it was impossible to understand the consciousness of the Sarmcol workers in isolation from their past history. And in order to understand how community knowledge was created and consciousness developed it was necessary to understand the dynamics of the past.

Thus the theoretical formulations in chapter 1 centered around the questions of class consciousness and ideology. Vital to this was an understanding of human agency and the role of 'experience'. It was postulated that these two concepts were not sufficient to understand consciousness, one also had to examine the role of tradition, of 'organic intellectuals' and the structural forces at play. I felt that empirical investigations could show that the experiences of the past were crucial to understanding the consciousness of the present. From the wish to investigate experience and meaning a suitable methodology was theorised and formulated.

Chapter 2 discusses the research process. It was argued that oral histories, while they provide a richness of meaning and experience, were not sufficient to uncover the structural forces at play. The research

Chapter 4 examines the former experiences. The development of the Sarmcol factory is examined from below i.e. the accounts of the workers. It is argued that it is impossible to understand the eagerness of the workers to join unions, their determination to only accept a recognition agreement that would protect them and the solidarity of the strike if one does not understand the harshness of the Sarmcol working experience.

The first experience of unionisation occurred during the 1950's. Chapter 5 examines these accounts: first under the Howick Rubber Workers' Union and later under the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union. However, during this period Harry Gwala was their trade union organiser and the workers remember this as the time of 'Gwala's Union'. It is argued that there is a continuity between unionisation in the 1950's and organisation under the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) in the 1970's. An important aspect of this, continuity is the role of 'organic' intellectuals (see below).

From unionisation in the 1950's the thesis turns to look, in chapter 6, at unionisation under MAWU. It is argued that the memories of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) played an important role in union formation in the early 1970's. However, it was the policies of BTR Sarmcol particularly over retrenchment in the early 1980's that 'pushed MAWU inside'. This chapter also examines the struggles that were taking place in the community during this time. Its final argument is that it was the harsh experience

of working at Sarmcol that led workers to dare all in the outright confrontation of a strike and it was the community solidarity of previous struggles that provided them with their support and strength to carry on.

Chapter 7 gives an account of the strike and the campaign for reinstatement. It looks at the campaign in terms of three aspects. Firstly, internal political action and solidarity, secondly, international solidarity and, finally, the legal option. It also examines the workers response to their long period of unemployment - the establishment of the Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative (SAWCO). It is argued that their solidarity during a strike which is presently in its third year is as a result of their consciousness.

The final chapter tries to draw all these threads together. It argues that in all communities, but particularly those with strong oral traditions, the 'organic' intellectuals are vital in forging common identities and consciousness. The chapter examines in more detail the role of those 'organic' intellectuals. It then isolates themes in the consciousness of the workers. It does this by looking at three important influences - the loss of land, unionisation during the 1950's and the role of the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

As the structuralist strand of marxism developed and came to dominate marxist scholarship during the 1960's and 1970's so subjects were abolished from history altogether (Anderson, 1983). In recent years the hegemony of structuralism has been challenged, primarily by historians e.g. E.P. Thompson & Eric Hobsbawn. To cite Anderson (1983:26)

"Edward Thompson's prolonged and passionate polemic ... turned an intellectual page - irreversibly. Whatever our view of the merits of the dispute, it is henceforward impossible for Marxists to proceed - as they did for many years, on either side - as if their history and their theory were two separate mental worlds, with little more than occasional tourism, mildly curious, between them."

These debates and theoretical writings of western marxists have had a fundamental effect on all aspects of marxist understanding in the South African situation i.e. for both epistemological and empirical investigations. Marxist analysis of South Africa was revitalised in the early 1970's (see Marks, 1981; Johnstone, 1982; Lonsdale, 1983; Webster, 1985a). There was a fundamental break, characterised by Webster

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humanism and incorporated them into marxism.

(1985a) as a paradigm shift, with the liberal tradition which had theorised an antagonistic relationship between capitalism and apartheid. A new understanding was postulated. It was argued that apartheid South Africa was beneficial and advantageous to the development of capitalism (Wolpe, 1972; Legassick, 1974, 1975). The concept of class once more entered South African analysis.

The hegemony of the structural marxists had a number of implications for South African scholarship.

- studies concentrated on the relationship of the state to other sectors of South African society.
- concrete experience of class struggle was ignored which led to the disjuncture in academic thought between the 1970's and early periods of struggle.
- the experiences and interpretations of individuals and communities was disregarded in favour of archive work, legislation and commission reports which resulted in a history from above.

Only in the 1980's did the South African 'masses' get a chance to speak and thus shape academic writing. The 'South African challenge' has come from two directions, though there are many similarities between the two. Firstly, there is what could be broadly defined as the 'History Workshop' tradition. This group draws much of its theoretical inspiration from the work of Edward Thompson and the english historians. They are seeking to move away from work which concentrates on the lives of 'great men' and instead document the experiences from below. Bozzoli (1987:2) captures the essence of this approach:

"In an ideal analysis, we would have to start from the very basic experiential category of the individual, work through the local groups and communities in which such individuals forge their world view, and tease out the layers of ideology-formation which shape that individual into the group or community of which he or she is a part. All this, moreover, would have to be done against the background of broader social and economic changes."

Secondly, there is the 'new labour studies group'. This argues Webster (1985b) arises out of research connected directly to the labour movement. It is committed research using new methods which are appropriate to its task, whether they be oral histories, or indepth-interviews, or surveys. However, some of the research which would fit into the 'history workshop tradition' would also form part of the 'new labour studies'. It is argued that this thesis falls into this latter category.

If we are to consider seriously the question of class struggle as a primary force of historical change then we cannot escape its rider: the thorny question of class consciousness. It is imperative to understand class consciousness if we are to understand and/or explain the actions a class undertakes.

Poulantzas (1975) defines two forms of class struggle - economic struggle and political struggle. He arrives at this definition from a reading of Marx's arguments

in The Poverty of Philosophy (cited in Poulantzas 1975:59),

"Economic conditions had at first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle."

Marx argued that a class will never attain revolutionary consciousness until it transforms itself from a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself. However it is argued that, the class consciousness necessary for this transformation is a concept with which marxist theory has never adequately dealt. The actual mechanisms of this transformation, as well as, the definition of revolutionary consciousness was left unexamined by Marx.

Lukacs was the first writer to examine seriously the question of consciousness<sup>2</sup>. He (1971:73) argues

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2. This is not to deny that other theorists eg Poulantzas have not examined it, they have, but their examination is in relation to class position and the debate over objective or subjective class determination and not consciousness and its

"that class consciousness is identical with neither the psychological consciousness of individual members of the proletariat, nor with the (mass-psychological) consciousness of the proletariat as a whole; but it is, on the contrary, the sense, become consciousness, of the historical role of the class."

He argues that everything which happens in history is as a result of a conscious purpose or intended aim. Despite this, history can not be understood through the purposes of men and women. He concludes, as quoted above, that the real forces of history are independent of either the individual or the mass (psychological) consciousness of them. However, people do make history, he maintains, but in false consciousness, and if we are to understand history we have to understand false consciousness (McDonough, 1978).

"The dialectical method does not permit us simply to proclaim the 'falseness' of this consciousness and to persist in an inflexible confrontation of true and false. On the contrary, it requires us to investigate this 'false consciousness' concretely as an aspect of the historical totality and as a stage in the historical process."

(Lukacs, 1971:50)

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development as concepts in their own right.

It is only possible for the proletariat to achieve 'true' consciousness during the time of a revolutionary crisis.

"Thus the attainment of this 'ascribed' consciousness is in effect synonymous with assuming the leadership of society, since an adequate consciousness is already a practice that alters its object."

(Stedman Jones 1977:17)

Lukacs' explanation of class consciousness is most unsatisfactory when one is trying to come to some understanding of the process by which consciousness is formed and its present relationship to class struggle. He argues that the real forces of history are independent of either the individual or the mass consciousness of them. However, people do make history - but in false consciousness. Here he does two things:

1. he removes from the men and women who make up the class or community the ability to shape history. In doing so he negates the role of their past experiences as a class, the interpretation and meaning which they would give to those past experiences and thus the decisions, actions etc which they would take about the future.
2. He claims, however, that they do make history but in false consciousness. By doing this he puts a value judgment onto the way a class or community would understand their life and future in struggle. It is either 'false' or 'true', a 'class-in-itself' or a 'class-for-itself'. This interpretation

leaves itself open to a simplistic interpretation of class consciousness. Human experience is a complexity of mosaics. With a simple definition it is impossible to understand the synthesis of complex 'cultural formations, 'defensive combinations', resistance and the struggle for control over 'conditions of life and subjectivities' (Sitas 1984, 1987b) that results in class consciousness. Thus there is no room for an understanding of class consciousness as a process, the result of the past experiences of that class or community and thus valid and true, given the historical experience, for that particular community.

These points will be examined in more detail below.

## 1.2 THEORETICAL FORMULATIONS

Most studies on or about class consciousness seem to concentrate on the class-in-itself, class-for itself, true or false problematic (Mann, 1974; Fisher, 1978). These studies try to differentiate different levels of consciousness - trade union/worker, economic, political, revolutionary - through which the class would need to move before becoming a class-for-itself. In many cases these studies fall into the following trap as outlined by Goldberg (1981:37)

"... the collective consciousness is not the sum of the individual 'consciousness'. 'This

consciousness is ... neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by the single individuals who make up the class' (Lukacs, 1971:51). Otherwise it would be simple enough to discover collective consciousness through Gallup polls for example - a simple survey of the views of agents comprising a social class would soon establish the balance of opinion, the essence of that class consciousness."

This study, as argued above, is trying to move away from this simplistic definition of 'ya or nay consciousness' to an examination of the process by which class consciousness is formed\*. It is accepted that there is a difference between individual and collective consciousness (Goldberg, 1981).

If it is argued that each worker has a reservoir of class experiences, then it becomes necessary to divert slightly from the discussion in order to discuss briefly the equally thorny question of class, class position, experience and consciousness. The debate centers around the objective/subjective definition of class position.

Cohen (1978:73) throws some clarity onto this definition,

"It defines the class with reference to the position of its members in the economic structure, their effective rights and duties within it. A person's class is established

by nothing but his (sic) objective place in the network of ownership relations, however difficult it may be to identify such places neatly. His (sic) consciousness, culture, and politics do not enter the definition of his (sic) class position. Indeed, these exclusions are required to protect the substantive character of the Marxian thesis that class position strongly conditions consciousness, culture and politics."

Sartre (cited in Sitas, 1984) criticised marxists for denying 'history' or 'society' any childhood. Sitas (1984, 1985, 1986, 1987(a), 1987(b)) picks up on this by arguing that cultural formations arise from the attempts of ordinary people to control their lives. In other words there are elements of these cultural formations that socialise people as individuals before they enter the world of factory life. Implicit in these arguments is the notion that consciousness is shaped, to some extent, by cultural formations. However, it has never been explicitly stated. If one examines consciousness in a similar way, and argues that elements of consciousness are formed outside of relations of production then it becomes necessary to conceptualise class position and class consciousness separately.

Structural forces thrust individuals together whether at the point of production or the place where they live. Into this forced relationship with each other, they bring traditions and experiences from their past

(i.e. individual specifics but often generalised experiences). Through being in the immediate vicinity of each other they now face similar problems, structural forces and experiences. Through these common, lived experiences a sense of community develops, whereby those individuals perceive themselves as a grouping, a community which has a common consciousness and way of understanding the world. In other words the individual consciousness is transformed into a collective consciousness.

"Collective consciousness is an activity, a force informed by the material conditions which comprise not simply material production but also such elements as intellectual activity, political and ideological factors."  
(Goldberg, 1981:38)

E. P. Thompson (1963) in his book The Making of the English Working Class employs two concepts - human agency and experience to present his argument. I would argue that these concepts are also vital to an understanding of class consciousness. However to these concepts I have added three more: 'grassroots intellectuals', structural conditions and tradition.

Human agency is the active intervention of men and women in the historical process. Anderson (1980) argues that to render this meaningful it is necessary to distinguish at least three qualitatively different types of goals: private goals, collective or individual projects whose goals were public and collective projects which sought to render their

initiators authors of their collective mode of existence as a whole. However, it is the last usage of the term which is of interest to this study. It is through active intervention in areas where the community or class is aware that it is challenging a structural force that a constitutive consciousness arises. The knowledge that is acquired through this active intervention makes them aware that they are capable of changing the dominant relations around them.

"The pattern of human agency is the problem of finding a way of accounting for human experience which recognises simultaneously and in equal measure that history and society are made by constant and more or less purposeful individual action and that individual action, however purposeful, is made by history and society."

(Marks, 1986:9/10)

Thus human agency is not only a reaction to structural oppression and exploitation, it is often a decision to challenge structural oppression and exploitation taken with the full knowledge of the possible outcomes based on past experiences of active intervention. As Anderson (1980:22, own emphasis) argues,

"The whole purpose of historical materialism, after all, has precisely been to give men and women the means with which to exercise a real popular self-determination for the first time in history."

The concept of experience is a crucial adjunct to that of human agency. It is surely through experiences E.P. Thompson insists, that objective determinations become subjective initiatives, adding that experience is valid and effective within determined limits.

On the other hand Anderson (1980) objects to the vagueness of Thompson's definition. He identifies two different definitions: Firstly, as a mental and emotional response to similar events. This situates experience 'within' consciousness as a subjective reaction. Secondly as 'handled' to yield the responses of class and culture i.e. a process of learning occurs from such experiences. At times, he argues, Thompson conflates the two usages. In this way he suggests an alternative way of reading history as a whole. Anderson disagrees with the first definition, to some degree he accepts the second, but maintains that it has certain structural limits.

This debate has much to offer towards an analysis of the process of consciousness development. It is argued that past experiences of active intervention (human agency), and the traditions which these experiences have maintained and evoked, have been primary in the development of the current consciousness of the community. I would agree, with Anderson, that structural determinants are important, but, in the final analysis, Thompson's argument is the more crucial to understanding the development of consciousness.

Anderson's critique relies to a large extent on examples, which he uses to illustrate the fallibility

of Thompson's definition. However his arguments are developed at the level of the individual. He does not take into account that a community is undergoing the experience, that within a community there is debate, and, it is at the level of their common understanding and definition that consciousness develops. As a result of their prior experiences, and the consciousness in which these have resulted, the community decides if an experience is valid or not. During this subjective process, the experience will be situated within the social conditions of the time. Part of this community experience is the role which organic intellectuals play.

"Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields."

(Gramsci, 1971:5, emphasis added).

In the above quote Gramsci (1971) defines the function of the intellectuals in society. Organic intellectuals are those intellectuals who arise from a particular social class. Thus both the dominant and dominated classes have their organic intellectuals. Reintges (1986:14) cites from Gramsci the following functions of 'revolutionary' organic intellectuals:

"- to arouse the masses from passivity, i.e. innovate.

- to direct spontaneous energies into various forms of protest.
- to educate the masses so as to overcome contradictory consciousness, alienation etc.
- to help elaborate a theoretical consciousness of being creators of history.
- to combat a sense of naive fatalism that workers must, of necessity, and in time, naturally triumph."

The organic intellectuals provide a common meaning and interpretation of the experiences which a community or class has gone through. Not only do they participate in the creation of a mass consciousness but they also provide the alternative vision of society.

"The consciousness cannot be passive and indirect, but must be active and direct: it therefore necessitates the participation of individuals even if that brings about an appearance of disintegration and tumult. A collective consciousness, a living organism, does not get formed before multiplicity is united by the rubbing together of individuals."

(Gramsci, cited in McLennan, 1980:179).

Gramsci was conceptualising these ideas within the largely literate world of twentieth century Italy. His previous occupation was as editor of the party newspaper - which was widely read by the working class

(Gramsci, 1971). However, in Africa, a large percentage of the working class is semi- or illiterate. We need to find the ways in which knowledge is passed on in an illiterate culture. Sitas (1985) points to the 'accumulation of public class knowledge' which is 'based on concrete experience'. This 'knowledge' has both rational and symbolic aspects. The rational aspect of the knowledge describes, explains and justifies the world with reference to belief systems. Yet it is the symbolic aspect of this knowledge which is the most powerful in cementing cultural formations. This,

"denotes the range of metaphors, images, allusions and popular appeals that proliferated through transmitted and experiential sources in the hostels. These were evocative in nature, capturing in a single sentence clusters of experience, and in a single reference alluding to commonly held values."

(Sitas 1985:36)

Thus, to understand the implications of this for the process of consciousness formation, we need to go beyond Gramsci and examine the organic symbols and traditions utilised by grassroots intellectuals in oral cultures of resistance. It is argued that the use of 'grassroots intellectuals' is an extension of Gramsci's concept 'organic intellectual'.

A problem which Anderson (1980) has with Thompson's usage of the concept of experience is that it can become a subjective reaction - 'mental and emotional

response' - to objective events. However with the introduction of the role of grassroots intellectuals in the process of consciousness development, this problem of Anderson's is overcome. To cite Reintges (1986:15)

"The intellectuals role, often, comprises the guidance of energy through a formalisation of the unknown sources of emotional energy. A successful interrelationship between intellectuals and the 'popular element' leads to the conversion of structures from an externally crushing force (Gramsci, 1971) to instruments facilitating achievement of desired goods (Bobbio, 1979)."

Traditions of a community also need to be understood. They are often used by the grassroots intellectuals to provide meaning in contemporary situations and thus influence consciousness. However, as Hobsbawn (1983) argues, tradition can be invented.

"'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."

Where old ways are still alive, traditions do not need to be invented. It is important that invented traditions are not confused with genuine traditions

This discussion of tradition - invented or genuine - is not meant to provide a value judgment on the

consciousness of classes or communities. It is merely meant to maintain that the traditions - genuine and invented - are utilized by grassroots intellectuals in providing meaning to experiences. In trying to uncover the process of the development of class consciousness we need to be aware of these dynamics.

Furthermore, there is another dynamic which needs to be stressed. In many cases the raw materials of the traditions utilised by grassroots intellectuals have a 'non-class' origin. For example, references to ancestors, praise-names of chiefs, family, lineage and chiefly structures, social custom etc are common to cultural groups outside of class formations. In other words there are forms of social solidarity which are not class solidarities (Sitas, 1987b). Yet even if these traditions have a 'non-class' origin their invention cannot escape a class determination. For example the way in which Inkatha has utilised the traditional concept of the family reinforces b\\lth patriarchy and respect for elders which b\\lsters bourgeoisie ideology and domination. Working class movements also appeal to non-class elements for class organisation. Gunner (1986) illustrates how working class poets are utilising traditional, chiefly praises as praise-names for new kinds of power, leadership and organisation.

"The three trades union poets to whom I have referred are each, in their individual ways, laying claim to and using powerful cultural symbols from within zulu (and to a lesser extent xhosa) tradition. They show how a

working class culture can show inheritance of, rather than dispossession from, those nationalist and popular symbols so vital to a people's contemporary self-image."

(Gunner 1986:37)

Thus one is led to conclude that there is no one tradition, from which grassroots intellectuals draw, but there are a number of different invented traditions constrained by class determination (Laclau, 1977; Mare, 1984; Sitas, 1987b).

Interwoven through all these 'subjective' formulations are the structural forces and constraints. And it is not possible to analysis the process of class consciousness without being aware of and elucidating the structural conditions. They operate in a dialectical manner with the subjective forces - each reacting to and challenging the other.

In conclusion, it is argued that theoretical work on class consciousness is most unsatisfactory. There has been no attempt to understand the process of consciousness formation. It is argued above that if we are to consider seriously that question then we need to look at the role of human agency, experience, grassroots intellectuals and tradition, as well as structural forces. However, each of these is interwoven and inter-related and it would be foolish and detrimental to any analysis to try and isolate them. In other words we need to

"... bring together in some sense the insights we have gained from both the new

social history and the structural marxism of the seventies, by looking both at individual agency and social constraints."

(Marks 1986:8)

For the Sarmcol workers under discussion, their way of 'understanding the world' has put them into direct conflict and confrontation with Sarmcol management, the state and, more recently, Inkatha. As a result they have, while on legal strike been fired from their place of work; on numerous occasions had their township invaded by the police; Phineas Sibiya, chairperson of the shop stewards council and SAWCO, Simon Ngubane, shop steward and cultural activist and Flomin Minikathi, daughter of a Sarmcol striker and health committee member were abducted and murdered; and finally the verdict of the Industrial Court Case on which they had placed so much hope was announced in favour of Sarmcol management. And so, to their lifetime of hardship, suffering and struggle the Sarmcol strikers can add these last experiences.

In order to illuminate these theoretical points of discussion, one needs to turn to the experiences of the Sarmcol strikers. What will be found is that the experiences of the past have been processed, to result in a consciousness peculiar to that community. Without a knowledge of this past, it is difficult to understand fully and explain their present consciousness. However, before it is possible to turn to the more empirical discussion it is necessary to discuss the methodology of the research process.

## CHAPTER 2    METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESS

### 1.1    METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS

"We are a bit tired of learning what the sociologists think; we want to ask them what they are doing. And if a theoretical approach believes it can delineate the central areas of social life, it must put forward a specific method which would enable analysis to reach these areas."

(Touraine, 1981:139)

It was argued in the previous chapter that the central focus of this thesis is the process of the development of class consciousness. In attempting to resolve this question, one is faced with the age-old problem of historical materialism - the relationship between 'structure and subject in human history'. As a result of the hegemony of structural marxism, questions of human agency and consciousness were largely ignored. In more recent years the work of english historians has challenged this domination. These challenges have been taken up in South African writings by both 'history workshop' historians and the 'new labour studies' group.

Most of the studies dealing with the question of class consciousness have centered around the 'true' or 'false' problematic. This study, as argued above, is attempting to move away from this simplistic definition to an examination of the social process of consciousness formation. It is argued that by unpacking this process, some light will be thrown on the relationship between structure and subject in society. It was argued that if this process is examined, one needs to understand the relationship between human agency, experience, grassroots intellectuals, tradition and structural forces.

In essence the five specified areas of examination fall on either side of the structure/subject divide. Thus, given this emphasis on the relationship between structure and subject, it was vital to the thesis that the research methodology and techniques utilised could uncover the delicate nuances of the relationship. The structural forces which had affected both the Lions River area and the Sarmcol workers would have to be determined. In resistance to these structural forces there would have been both active and passive intervention which would have to be documented. The experiences of these structural forces and their intervention (both individual and collective) as well as traditions would have provided meaning which would form the base for further intervention. And interwoven amongst all these strands would be the grassroots intellectuals - drawing together communities, directing energies, educating and explaining. To cite Sitas (1987b:19)

"... workers do not 'adjust' to systems of dominant interpellations, they rather, as I have shown elsewhere, react by forming 'defensive combinations' from which spring-up 'proto-communities' or cultural formations. And, within these, the issue of control over conditions of life and subjectivities is of paramount importance. It is on the basis of these that cultural practices proliferate which generate both adjustments to dominant interpellations and resistance. In Natal, these cultural formations have generated a very vibrant tradition of practices and performances primarily oral which cannot be seen simply as an imposed culture of adjustment."

The life experiences of the Sarmcol workers provide a rich tapestry for the above investigation. Firstly, not only are the majority of the workers over 40 years of age, but in many instances two generations are represented. We are thus dealing with experiences which cover many decades and therefore it is easier to grasp the processes at hand. Secondly, Sarmcol itself has been established in Howick since 1919 and has been a central force in shaping the area. Thirdly, the experience of labour tenancy and alienation from the land adds a further dimension to the question of 'process'. Fourthly, there is the long history of trade union organisation at Sarmcol which would throw light onto the areas of human agency, experience and the role of the grassroots intellectuals. And,

finally, there was the question of the strike. Human agency, experience, grassroots intellectuals, tradition and structural forces had merged to produce the most bitter and protracted struggle in South Africa's labour history.

Positivist theory and its accompanying methodology, has for many years been the dominant school (see Wilson, 1983; Webster, 1985). The central tenants of positivism are thus: firstly, there are no fundamental differences between the natural and social sciences. The aim of sociology is to formulate principles that have the same objective status as natural scientific laws. Secondly, these laws or principles are the means of explaining social events or phenomena. Thirdly, social reality is made known through concepts which refer to what is observable and measurable. Fourthly, science is value-free. The tenants of positivism led it to adopt an empiricist methodology (Wilson, 1983). Within the last two decades this domination has been seriously challenged (see Wilson, 1983; Webster, 1985). This has provided debate not only around the theoretical issues but also around the question of methodology. These debates have ranged both between schools of thought e.g. idealist, phenomenological and realist, as well as within schools of thought e.g. structural and humanist marxism (see Gouldner, 1970; Phillips, 1971; Giddens, 1974; Keat & Urry, 1975; Anderson, 1976, 1980, 1983; Smart, 1976; Thompson, 1978; Turner & Beechley, 1981; Reinhartz, 1983; Wilson, 1983; Marks, 1986; Morris, 1987(a), 1987(b)).

Structural marxists (see McCarthy, 1983) would argue that it is possible to separate techniques of social research from theoretical practice. However, marxists (E.P. Thompson 1963; Paul Thompson 1978) argue that theory and techniques cannot be separated; the two form part of an integral whole. These marxists would argue for 'new more appropriate' methods.

Thompson (1978) argues that oral history is the new and more appropriate method as well as being a political choice. He states that the merit of oral history is not that it contains an implicit political stance but rather that it leads historians to realise that their work takes place within a social context with political implications. In other words they are forced to confront the issue of 'whose history?'. However, McLennan (1981:117) warns against this interpretation,

"First, oral history, literally, is a technique or a kind of source. In itself it is not a theoretical or political choice of a specific nature."

McLennan's (1981) argument has a certain degree of appeal. Oral history is a technique of research. Yet like all techniques it is related to a theoretical process from which it cannot escape.

"It provides a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past, a challenge to the established account. In so doing, oral history has radical implications for the social message of history as a whole."

(Thompson 1978:5)

Oral history sees each ordinary person's life history as having the potential to make a unique contribution

towards the construction of history from below. Thus there is no consideration of the representativeness of that individual's views or lifestory, for his/her community.

Given the theoretical emphasis on human agency, experience and meaning - in-depth interviewing through the creation of oral histories seemed the best choice of technique.

The reconstruction of oral histories through in-depth interviewing has both limitations and advantages. Its advantages in terms of quality and depth of detail available are unique. It also empowers the subjects to give their meaning to experiences. Furthermore, it is the use of these techniques that have allowed the 'masses' to shape academic writings (see chapter 1). In terms of some marxist methodologies, and in particular, the hypothesis of this thesis these are non-negotiable research principles. While accepting these advantages it was found that it was impossible to ignore the disadvantages.

The disadvantages are twofold: firstly, it is not feasible to conduct in-depth interviews with many subjects. Thus while we might uncover experiences, meaning and examples of human agency, the issue of structural forces is ignored. It was felt that in-depth interviews alone were not sufficient to uncover and examine the structural forces at play. Secondly, while this thesis might be exploring the process of

consciousness development it must be remembered that consciousness is not the sum of individual consciousness. Given these disadvantages, it was problematic to utilise only indepth-interviews for fieldwork.

The initial thinking was that research techniques could be divorced from methodological theory<sup>3</sup>. The use of a survey does not necessarily mean that the researcher adheres to positivist values about social science (for further information on positivism see, Giddens, 1974; Wilson, 1983). Research does not take place in a vacuum untainted by values and emotions. The researcher makes a conscious decision as to which side of the fence s/he will occupy (Gouldner 1970). However, this does not preclude research from being formulated, conducted and analysed within a critical framework.

As a result of these formulations it was decided to utilise a number of different research techniques. These different techniques would complement each other.

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3. The technique is the method used to extract the relevant information from the research field. It is the methodological theory that is conceptually weighted and it is in this area that debates between different schools of thought take place.

Firstly, initial involvement with the workers could take the role of participant observation. In terms of trying to understand the present consciousness it would provide crucial insights. It would also enable the workers to come to know, accept and trust the researcher. Without this process happening it would have been difficult to conduct the other parts of the research. Finally, it would have enabled the researcher to give back (time, resources etc) to the community in terms of active participation.

Secondly, an extensive survey of the workers was to be administered. This was to counter the disadvantages of in-depth interviewing. It was felt that it would provide 'a map' of the lives of the Sarmcol workers. It was also argued that surveys which do not ask about values or opinions can be utilised by all social scientists. However, once surveys are used to measure values or opinions it becomes impossible to separate the technique from the theory.

Thirdly, once themes from the survey had been identified, in-depth-interviews were to be conducted with individuals selected from the thematic groups. It would be these interviews which would provide one with the concrete experience, meanings and rules that shaped consciousness.

## 2.2 RESEARCH PROCESS

The first step in the research process was to define

the research field. The universe was defined as those people who had worked at Sarmcol and who were now on strike. The research aim was to uncover the process behind the development of consciousness. The details of the research process are outlined in more detail below. Besides fieldwork the researcher also utilised primary resource material.

#### 2.2.1. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Observation, for research purposes, can be divided into two distinct categories - overt and covert. However, there are many shades between the two extremes. Briefly, covert observation is when the researcher sits on the sidelines of the community, observes the situation, and then writes up fieldnotes. An overt or participant observer takes a more active part in the community. S/he could live among the people with whom s/he is working, become involved in community projects etc.

Given the nature of the researcher's initial involvement with the Sarmcol workers and the wider community, covert observation was not an option. Thus, participant observation was used in an attempt to orientate the researcher to the research field, to familiarise the researcher with the issues that the community considered to be landmarks in their history and to build up trust with the community.

The researcher attended the general strikers' meeting once a week for a period of a year i.e. 1985/1986.

After this period attendance was more random. The general meeting, involving all the strikers, is the most important meeting. Here report-backs are given, issues debated and decisions taken. However, the general meetings also provide important insights - not only into the dynamics of the community but into its consciousness. It is here that one realises the importance of the intellectuals and the role they play in shaping the consciousness and dynamics.

In the course of the research the researcher was invited to attend other meetings e.g. the discussions which led to the formation of the Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative (SAWCO), SAWCO meetings, cultural group meetings and shop stewards' meetings. However, it must be stressed that the researcher was not invited to these meetings primarily because of the research work, but rather, to contribute actively to the discussions.

#### 2.2.2. SURVEY

The second but parallel stage of the research process was the administration of the survey. As stated above, the questionnaire did not have any questions which asked opinions, rather it concerned itself with 'factual information' e.g. number of wives, where you were born etc (see Appendix 1).

##### (a) Design of Questionnaire

A rigid closed-ended questionnaire was designed. It was designed so that it would be self-answerable. For

this purpose if was translated into Zulu. It was also pre-coded for computer analysis.

(b) Presentation to Shop Stewards' Council

A draft copy of the questionnaire was presented to the Shop Stewards' Council meeting for discussion. This is a vital part of the research process. Cicourel (1964:41) argues the point succinctly,

"In carrying out investigations in a modern community or in an industrial organisation, it has been found expedient and sometimes essential, to establish the initial contacts, with those people who have controlling voices in the community ... their endorsement of the project can be critical ..."

The shop stewards made suggestions which resulted in the modification of some of the questions and the addition of others.

(c) Pilot Study

Once comments from the Shop Steward's Council had been incorporated, a pilot study was done. The questionnaire was administered to nine of the Sarmcol workers. Design problems were found. The questionnaire was then adjusted to overcome these problems.

(d) Sample

At this point the only information we had about the workers was that there were 964 strikers and that 959 of them were men. We did not know their age

distribution, residence distribution or anything else about them. Therefore, it was decided to use a simple random sample. I obtained a list of workers' clock numbers from the Shop Stewards (which they had obtained from B.T.R. Sarmcol). These clock numbers would make up the universe. With the use of a list of random numbers a simple, random sample was chosen. Two hundred individuals were selected.

(e) Administration of Survey

In the final analysis the questionnaire was answered by one hundred and seventy-two workers. The questionnaire was administered over a number of weeks to small groups of workers (approximately 20) at a time. The researcher was available, at each session, to provide assistance. In order to control the biases associated with self-administered questionnaires, it was answered in a number of ways:

- for some of the people I asked the questions and filled in their responses on the form,
- some of the people answered it themselves after the meeting,
- some people took theirs' home and returned it at a later date.

(f) Results

Once the questionnaires were returned they were checked and the open-ended answers coded. The data was then entered into the mainframe computer and analysed using (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences X) SPSSx. The researcher was interested in finding totals, percentages and correlations.

### 2.2.3 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWING

From the 'map' constructed from the survey results, it was possible to identify trends of common experience e.g. the labour tenants who moved around to many farms, the workers who were born and lived in Impendle, those who came to work at Sarmcol in the 1950's, the old workers, the younger workers who only came in the seventies, those who left the farms early and those who stayed longer, those who lived in Howick West, those who stayed in Zenzele etc. Individuals whose life experiences were representative of these common experiences were selected for indepth-interviewing. It was felt that they would to some extent be holders of common experiences. Their life-stories would not only be personalised accounts, but because they had been selected as representatives of the trends shown by the survey, they would be reflective of the community history. In other words there was a fundamental difference between this approach and the method of oral history. A loosely structured, open-ended questionnaire was devised. This was used as an outline to probe discussion with the subject (see Appendix 2). In total, 20 in-depth interviews with individuals were conducted.

As the researcher does not speak Zulu a translator was used to assist with the interviews. The interviews were tape-recorded. In order to counter interviewer-biases a variety of interviewers were used. Once the

interviews were transcribed they were utilised in conjunction with the survey results.

### 2.3 RESEARCH PROBLEMS

It is argued that, besides the expected problems associated with any fieldwork e.g. non-response rate, badly filled in questionnaire etc the technical research process itself was fairly smooth.

However, during the research process it became obvious that one of the theoretical assumptions had proved incorrect. The initial assumption was that the theoretical beliefs which lie behind positivist methodology can be separated from its techniques. It was argued that, as social science is not value-free, it is possible to utilise the technique outside of its framework. During the research process a different picture emerged.

Firstly, there was the practical difficulty of trying to construct a dynamic questionnaire which attempts to take into account changes in the lives of the subjects. By trying to account for these dynamics the questionnaire tended to become long, complicated and unwieldy.

Secondly, it was found that it was impossible to escape from the inherent static nature of the questionnaire

method. For example, Question 7 (see Appendix I) deals with conditions where the workers live presently. Among the many sub-sections of the question are ones dealing with livestock ownership and agricultural activities. Now if for e.g. a striker has been living in 'place X' for 15 years, and he has only been on strike for the past 18 months, in answering the question should he refer to conditions pre- or post- 1 May 1985? Whereas before the strike he might have owned cows and chickens and planted many crops, now he has no money for seed and the livestock is sold.

It was these dynamic processes in individuals' lives that fixed-ended questionnaires could not account for or uncover. Thus, to attempt to determine changing social processes, the nuances and realities of individual or community lives, from a fixed-ended structured questionnaire, is very difficult.

It is difficult to assess the result of this theoretical miscalculation on the research itself. To a certain extent the survey did achieve its aim. It provided the researcher with a 'map' of the lives of the Sarmcol workers. The information obtained in the survey was corroborated by information obtained through other sources (both in-depth interviews, participant observation and secondary material). However, it is argued that any usefulness hinged around the fact that the researcher did not attempt to find out 'meanings' and 'values' through the use of such a survey technique.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

"Methods and methodology are not simply techniques and rationales for the conduct of research. Rather they must be understood in relation to specific historical, cultural, ideological and other contexts."

(Reinharz 1983:162)

In taking Reinharz's advice, this chapter not only outlined the research process followed in this thesis, it also attempted to show the link between the theoretical formulations of Chapter 1 and decisions relating to questions of methodology and research techniques.

As a result of these formulations a three-pronged research method was chosen. The results of this research are discussed in the chapters which follow.

### CHAPTER 3 DISPOSSESSION AND STRUGGLE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of land dispossession has become an emotive catchword in the history of popular resistance. One finds reference to this issue in official policy documents e.g. The Freedom Charter, the freedom songs associated with progressive organisations<sup>4</sup>, as well as in the utterings of ordinary working class people (see Sitas, 1985; Bradford, 1986; and below). Thus the land question has contributed fundamentally to the process of consciousness formation in South Africa.

For the Sarmcol workers, the issue of land is not only a reference to a romantic past of milk and honey, where one had land, cattle and no hunger. Access to land and subsequent dispossession is a lived experience in a ✓ community where 73 percent of workers were born into families of labour tenants. Thus, land relations and

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4. I owe this comment to Blade Nzimande.

dispossession, were common experiences to the majority of Sarmcol workers. As Sitas (1987b:18) argued

"... they have to found their interpellating mechanisms on a moment of general dispossession and on common attempts in struggle to forge a common destiny."

Thus the grassroots intellectuals have been able to use these common experiences of labour tenancy, land alienation and dispossession to draw the Sarmcol workers together into a community which has a common historical base.

✓ The abolition of labour tenancy was the end result of struggle between different fractions of capital and between farmers and labour tenants. The 'workers' in the countryside had to live and respond to the dynamics ✓ of the class struggle occurring at state level between different factions of capital. However, it is the oppressed class which, in many cases, determines the terrain of battle (see below).

### **3.2 NATAL AND THE EMERGENCE OF CAPITALIST AGRICULTURE - AN OVERVIEW**

✓ As stated above many of the Sarmcol workers were part of agrarian relations. It is therefore necessary to situate their experiences within the development of capitalist agriculture in the countryside. Morris (1979) examines the struggle between the 'imperialist

mining bourgeoisie' and the 'national agrarian  
 ✓ bourgeoisie' over access to labour. This led to a  
 major structural contradiction between town and  
 countryside. However, he claimed that this crisis was  
 ✓ resolved with the victory of the Nationalist Party  
 ✓ (representing agrarian capital) in 1948. The  
 ✓ experiences of the Natal Midlands' labour tenants show  
 this not to be the case. The period after the  
 Nationalist Party took power is a period of most  
 intense struggle between classes in the countryside.  
 It was over the next 25 years that large numbers of  
 ✓ labour tenants were forced to make choices between  
 becoming rural or urban proletarians or maintaining  
 some form of attachment to the land <sup>5</sup>The common  
 experiences of the labour tenants seem to suggest that  
 ✓ labour tenancy in Natal took a different path to the  
 rest of the country. It is argued that this is as a  
 ✓ result of the type of agriculture, as well as the

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5. This period has been sorely neglected by agrarian scholars. None of the contemporary writings (see Morris, 1979; Marks & Atmore, 1980; Beinart, Delius & Trapido, 1986; Keegan, 1986; Beinart & Bundy, 1987) examine the period after 1930. The only literature which deals with this period is that concerned with documenting the trail of relocation and removals (see Mare, 1980; Walker, 1982; Surplus People's Project, 1983) the one exception is Marcus, 1986.

✓ historical patterns of land tenure (Christopher, 1969)<sup>6</sup>

The Lions River District stretches to the north west of Pietermaritzburg. To the north is Umvoti and New Hanover, to the west Mooiriver and south of it is Impendle. It thus falls in the heart of the Natal midlands. The Lions River area is primarily mixed farming (interviews), unlike the rest of the midlands where wattle farming dominates (Slater, 1980; ✓ Bradford, 1986). Not much industrial development has taken place, the exception being Mooi River (textile industry) and Howick (B.T.R. Sarmcol). Much of the ✓ Lions River area is white farmland. Christopher (1986) shows that this land was first expropriated by the Voortrekkers. Land speculation companies bought the rest. However, by the turn of the century much of this land had been sold to private white owners (Christopher, 1969; Slater, 1980). There are no ✓ reserve areas or crown land. However, poll tax records

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6. There is a lack of agriarian research concerned with Natal specifically. The work that has been done (see Bradford, 1986, 1987a, 1987b; Burton-Clark, 1987; and some articles in Marks & Atmore, 1980) is once more concerned with earlier historical periods. This silence has led academics to presume that the trends in the rest of the country are also applicable to Natal.

show that african inhabitants of the white farmlands fell under six chiefs - Hlalempini, Ngamula Mkize, Dhlokwake Zondi, Langalake Ngcobo, Bhekizizwe Zondi and Zuma. In 1951 6 438 taxpayers fell under these chiefs, ✓ all resident on white farms in the Lions River district (Natal Achieves, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, N1/1/2).

In comparison with the Witwatersrand, Natal has not been a region of rapid industrial growth. Agriculture ✓ in the coastal areas is confined to sugar plantations, which have their own specific labour requirements. Most of this labour consists of Pondo migrant workers (Beinart, 1987), while labour tenants are to be found ✓ living on the farms of central and northern Natal (Mare, 1980; Surplus People's Project, 1983; Burton-Clark, 1987). Labour tenancy is defined as:

"... (a) system the main feature of which, subject to innumerable differences in detail from district to district and even in the same district, is the giving of services for a certain period in the year to the farmer by the Native and/or his family in return for ✓ the right to reside on the farmer's land, to cultivate a portion of land, and to graze his stock on the farm."

(Holloway Commission, 1932:51)

The majority of Sarmcol workers either were themselves labour tenants or were born into the families of labour tenants, on white owned farms. They claimed that for generations their families had lived in the areas in which they were born. As the study by Christopher

✓ (1969) has shown, Natal's present land tenure patterns were established by the beginning of this century.

### 3.3. COLONISATION AND ACCESS TO LAND BEFORE 1910

#### 3.3.1 EXPROPRIATION AND THE SETTLERS

On any visit to Howick and its environs it could be that you would stumble upon a black man and stop to inquire about his life. This would have been a typical reply:

"I am somewhere between 51 and 60 years of age. At present I live at Mpophomeni, the african township 15 kms outside Howick.

However, I was not born in that place. My ancestors were born on the land, in a place where they could plough and keep cattle... And I was born on the land which had always belonged to my ancestors and their chiefs. But by the time I was born, our land had been taken over by the white farmers and our chief was pushed to Impendle. Look around at this countryside: Howick, Cedara, Merrivale - all green and fertile. It all belonged to Nxamalala and his people. But now our chief is in Impendle - a place of hills, rocks and the great wind - Inkanyamba...

After that, the white farmers kicked us off the land and we came to live near Howick, just next to the dam at a place called Zenzele. I went to the factory where my father, my brothers and my neighbours had worked. But we were not to stay at Zenzele.

Soon we were moved again by the government to Mpophomeni ... in Mpophomeni, I live with my wife and my four children. My family attends the Roman Catholic Church, my children go to school here. I have six other people dependent on my wage. I am fortunate that only seven of us stay in our four-room house, most of my neighbours are up to ten people in their houses.

My first job was at Sarmcol. I started there before I had twenty years. All my life I have worked for only this firm. I have been working for Sarmcol for more than thirty years... Working at Sarmcol has not been easy. The conditions were hard, the wages were low ... and recently there has been the fear of retrenchments. But now we are fighting for our dignity - we are strikers"

This story is typical of most of the workers - it is, after all, a computer construct from 172 interviews with Sarmcol workers, and thus represents the 'average worker' there. The Sarmcol workers trace their oppression back to the loss of land, taken from their chiefs by white settlers.

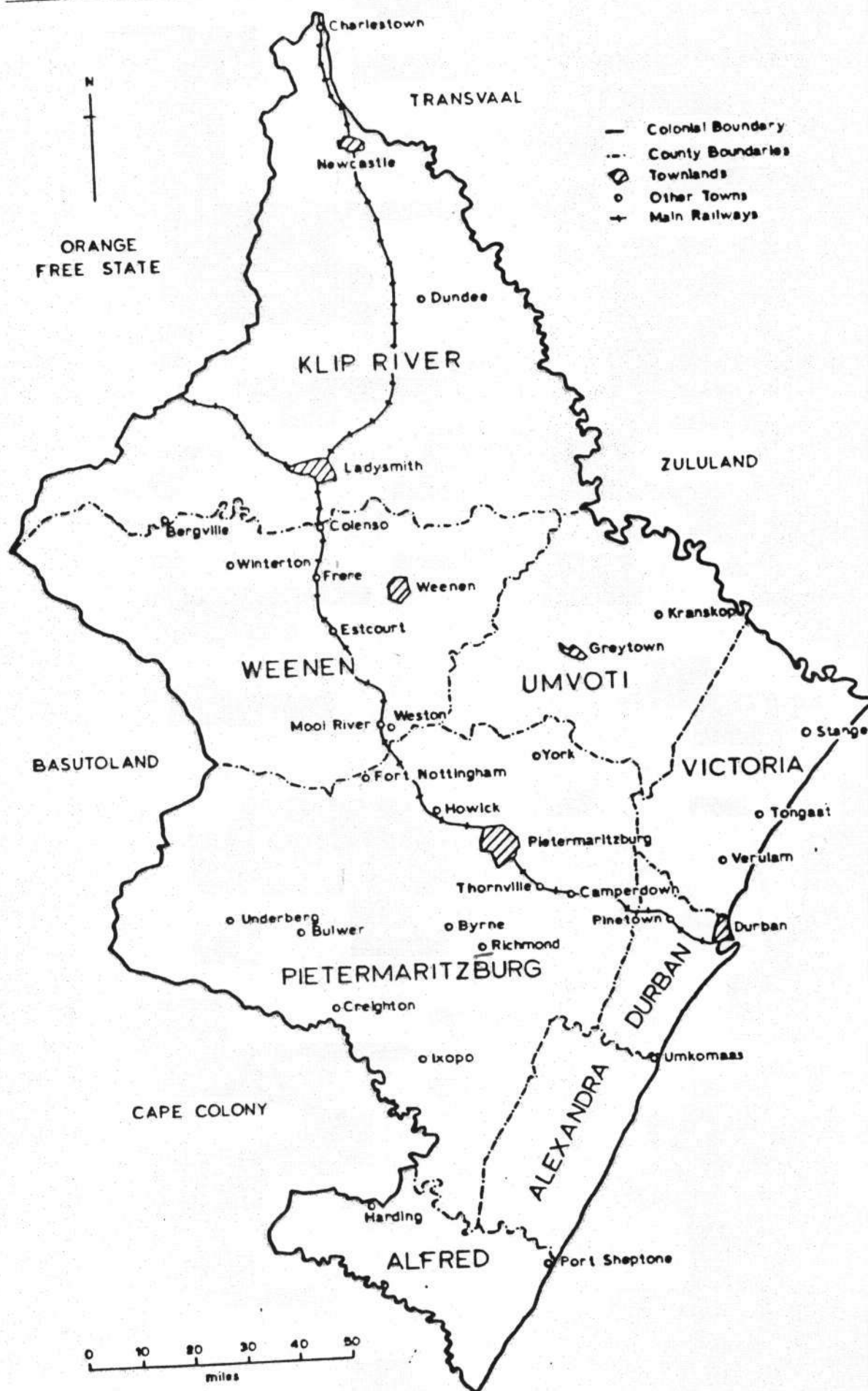
The colonisation of Natal began under the  
 / administration of the Voortrekker Republic in the  
 period 1838-1845. Many authors (Christopher, 1969;  
 Surplus Peoples Project (S.P.P., 1983) argue that it is  
 / in this period that the basic settlement patterns of  
 today have their roots. When the British Government  
 ✓ annexed Natal in 1842 they did no more than regularise  
 the situation the Voortrekkers had created.

Colonial Natal was divided into eight counties (see  
 Figure 1). The area of Howick and the present day  
 ✓ Lions River Magisterial district are to be found in the  
 County of Pietermaritzburg.

The land surrounding present day Howick was among the  
 first to be expropriated by the Voortrekkers (see  
 Figure 2). The agreement which the British signed when  
 ✓ they annexed Natal stated that they would not interfere  
 with the tenure of the Trekker farmers (Christopher,  
 1969).

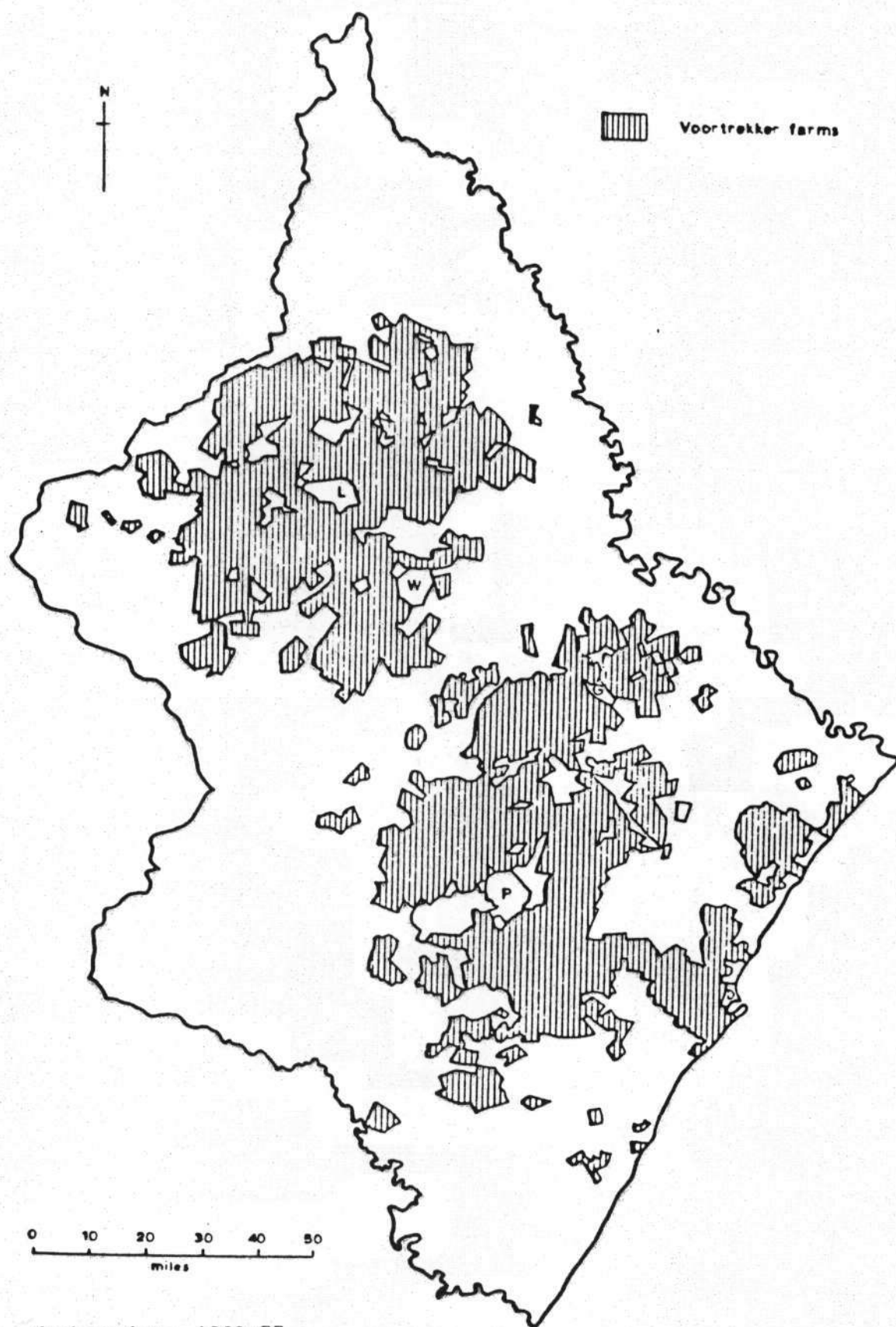
In 1847 the Colonial Government obtained land, some 30  
 kms outside of Pietermaritzburg, as the site for a  
 village - subsequently named Howick. A number of  
 settler schemes were established in the Lions River  
 District - Lidgetton (1850), Karkloof (1850) and New  
 Howick (1870), are the ones which are of concern to  
 this study. These schemes were established by the  
 purchasing and subdividing of Voortrekker grant farms.  
 While Lidgetton and Karkloof were private settler  
 schemes, New or Upper Howick was developed by the Natal

FIGURE 1: MAP OF COLONIAL NATAL



SOURCE: Christopher, 1969:xv.

FIGURE 2: AREA ALLOCATED TO THE VOORTREKKERS



SOURCE: Christopher, 1969:77.

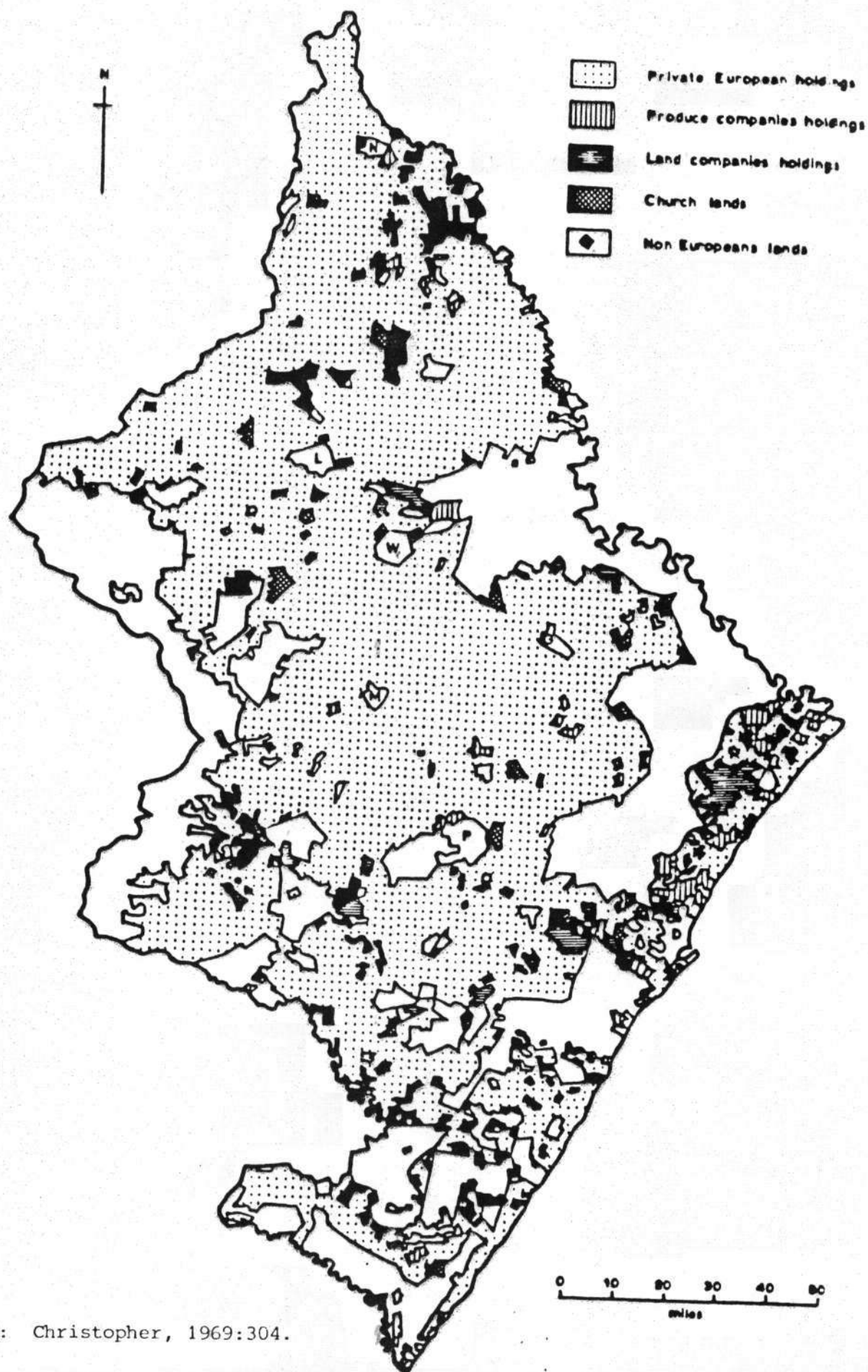
Land and Colonization Company. Lower Howick was given township status in 1916 but it was not until 1925 that the township was extended to include Upper Howick (Women's Institute, (undated); Christopher, 1969).

The surveying and allocating of land in Natal continued throughout the period before union and, by the time of union, this process was almost complete (see Figure 3). However, while Natal was being carved up by the colonists, and divided between the settlers, what was the position of the original inhabitants and where were they fitting into the scheme of things?

### 3.3.2 'NATIVE' POLICY BEFORE 1910

The British as were the Boers before them were most concerned with the 'Native Question'. Located within Natal were about 10 000 'aboriginal' blacks, as well as approximately 100 000 'refugee' africans, who had been dislocated by the Shaken wars, and now returned to their traditional lands (Marks, 1970; Slater, 1980; S.P.P., 1983(4)). However, the main problem facing the settlers was not 110 000 africans per se, but rather, the question of access to land. The african inhabitants already occupied the land. However, the land speculators, the trekkers and the commercial farmers also wanted that land. Not only was there demand for the land from both the settlers and the african population but the settlers, if they were to enter into commercial agriculture, needed labour. The African population had access to land and were

FIGURE 3: LAND ALLOCATION BY 1910



SOURCE: Christopher, 1969:304.

economically self-sufficient. Thus, for africans willingly to make themselves available as labour to white farmers they needed to be alienated from their traditional means of production. This was to become one of the major aims of the settler community<sup>7</sup>.

Land tenure in Natal prior to union, can be categorised into four major areas: the reserves/locations, the mission reserves, african freehold land, white and unalienated (state) land (S.P.P., 1983(4)).

However, as this chapter is primarily concerned with the experiences of the Sarmcol workers, and as they have inhabited only reserves and/or white land, only these two will be discussed.

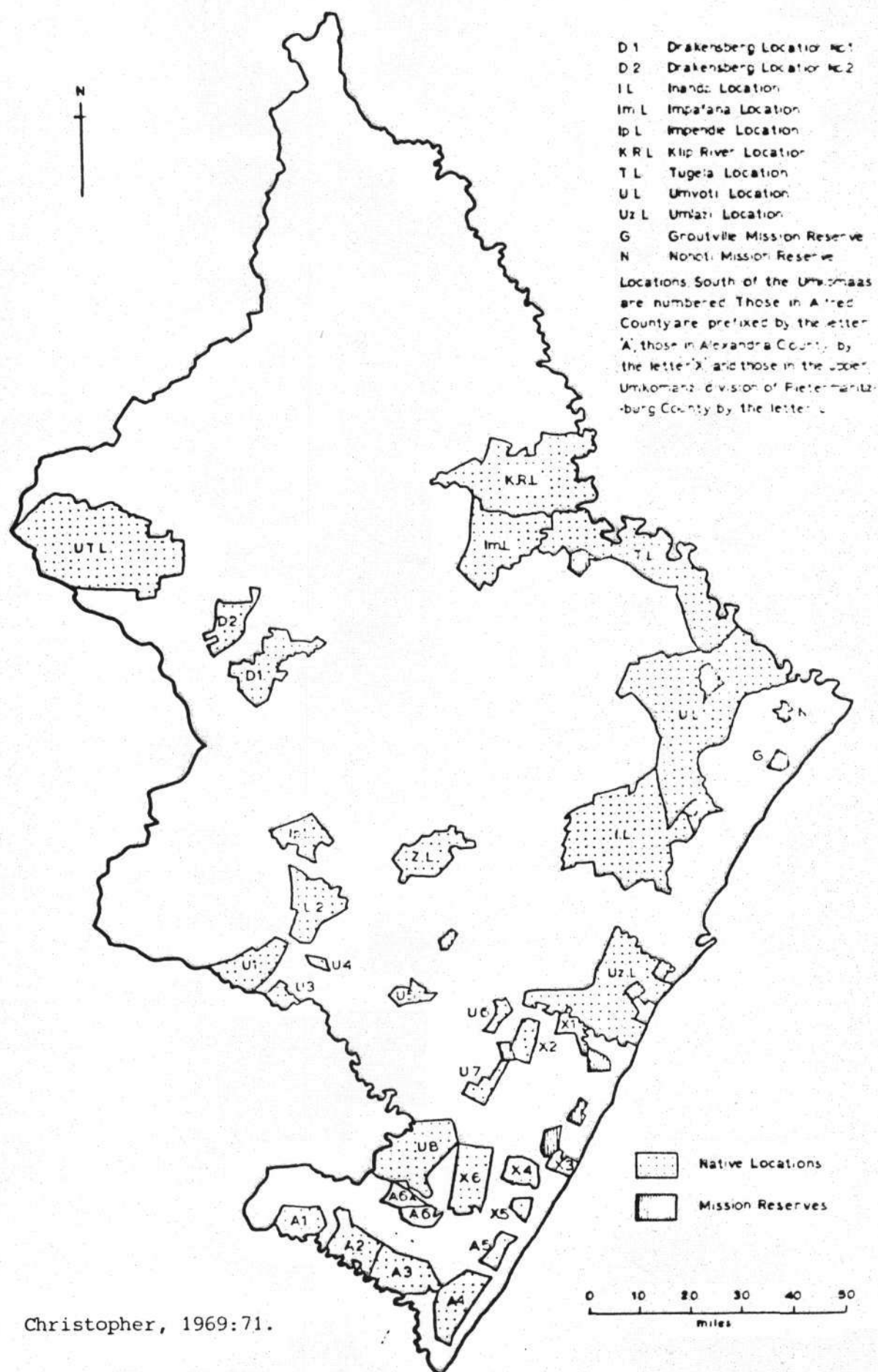
#### (a) The Reserves

In 1846 the Colonial Government appointed the Natal Native Commission. Their task was 'to investigate and make recommendations' upon what was to be done with the surplus 'native population' (Brooks and Hurwitz, 1957). The Commission recommended the establishment of seven locations: Zwartkop, Umlazi, Umvoti, Inanda, Impofana

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7 As Slater (1980) argues, the settler community was not a homogeneous group. There were different factions with different aims and objectives. However, at a crude level, this generalisation can be applied.

FIGURE 4: THE 'NATIVE' RESERVES



Umzinyathis and 'one on the Tugela' (see Figure 4). By 1864 the situation in Natal proper was substantially what it is today. The Natal Native Commission of 1881-2 claims that there were 42 locations covering 2,067,057 acres, and 21 mission reserves covering 174,862 acres (Brooks & Hurwitz, 1957).

In 1864 with the establishment of the Natal Native Trust, in which the ownership of the land was vested, the permanence of the locations was assured. Some 2 / million acres of land was allocated, much of which was of inferior quality (S.P.P., 1983(4)).

(b) White and Unalienated (state) Land

By the nineteenth century many africans squattered on crown or privately-owned land.

"... in Natal 'squatter' implied a Native who was allowed to settle or squat on a piece of land either on payment of a cash rent or a share of the crops produced by him on the land which he occupied."

(Holloway Commission, (1932:51))

However, commercial farmers needed labour. Throughout this period they tried to win control of the state apparatus so that they could implement 'their plan' regarding african proletarianisation. Capitalist agriculture could not survive alongside cash tenancy, a liberalised reserve policy or 'squatter' farming<sup>8</sup>. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the commercial farmers succeeded in gaining hegemony (Slater, 1980).

In many cases cash tenants were co-erced into accepting the conditions of labour tenancy (Holloway Commission). Bradford (1986) reports that, in Umvoti, cash rent

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8. 'Squatter farming' occurred when absentee landlords or land speculation companies owned large areas of uncultivated land and rented it out to squatters who paid them a cash rent for the privilege of utilizing the land.

tenants who comprised one third of Umvoti's african farm population in 1916 were slowly forced to become labour tenants. Burton-Clarke (1987) points to similar trends in the Weenen area. By the beginning of this century labour tenancy was the major form of african access to land outside the reserves (S.P.P. 1983(4)).

### 3.3.3 CONCLUSION

The results of the 'difekane' and expropriation by the Voortrekkers and land speculation companies laid the basis for later patterns of land tenure in Natal. However, it was the struggle 'over what to do with the africans?' between different groups within the settler class and the eventual seizure of control by the commercial farmers, that laid the foundations for future action against african land tenure (Slater, 1980). Thus the land tenure patterns of present-day Natal are rooted in the pre-union period. With the establishment of the Union in 1910 there were subsequently significant changes in land policy. The most notorious of which was the 1913 Natives Land Act. It is supposed that, perhaps, similar developments were taking place in other parts of South Africa, and that the 1913 Land Act was the legislative culmination of the shift in the balance of power in favour of farmers and other white employers (Slater 1980).

While both this Act and its successors dealt with all aspects of black land tenure, in the following section, only those aspects which are relevant to labour tenancy shall be discussed.

### 3.4. LEGISLATION AFFECTING LABOUR TENANTS IN NATAL

The 1913 Land Act can be likened to the trunk from which grew the branches of future land and labour legislation. Its major implications were the freezing of land available to africans and the terminating of all future freehold tenure for africans.

In the period from the formation of the Union until the abolition of labour tenancy in the late 1960's the legislation affecting labour tenancy was first tightened, almost tying the labour tenants to the farms and then more and more pressures were exerted, until labour tenancy was ultimately abolished. It is to an examination of this process that we shall now turn.

#### 3.4.1. THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS CONTROL

- ✓ Between 1924 and 1932 a number of laws were passed which served to entrench the system of labour tenancy. These laws were Native Taxation and Development Act (1925), Masters and Servants' Law (Transvaal and Natal) Amendment Act 26 (1926), Natives Administration Act (1927), its Amendment in 1929, Natives' (Urban Areas) Amendment Act (1930), Native Service Contract Act (1932) (Lacey, 1981).

Marcus (1986:86) sums up the provisions which affected labour tenants:

- "- term of minimum service was extended from 90 to 180 days;
- definition of a labour tenant changed to encompass a man, his wife, and their dependents;
- ✓ - whipping, formally only legally applicable to farm employees under Masters and Servants Regulations was extended to apply to labour tenants;
- power of summary eviction if a single member failed to fulfill the labour obligations was invested in the farmer;
- pass laws were extended and barriers to access to towns."

The dissatisfaction of labour tenants with the resulting conditions of this legislation is evidenced by the success of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) in recruiting members in the Natal countryside (Bradford, 1986). However, other legislation was also passed during this period which, although it did not relate directly to labour tenants, had as its function the control of labour tenants. The ✓ 1928 Liquor Act is one such example (see Bradford, 1987a).

#### 3.4.2. TIGHTENING CONTROL

During the 1940's farmers were facing continual

problems of labour shortages. This was as a result of  
 ✓ direct competition from industry, which was able to offer better wages and rations. Farmers felt that the answer to the problem lay in a number of areas":

- Chapter IV of the Native Trust Act of 1936 should be applicable to all provinces,
- squatter farms should be outlawed,
- ✓ - a proper system of registration and control of movement and employment should be implemented,
- conditions and legislation relating to industry should only apply to industry in the urban areas,
- "Black Belts" needed to be removed and the question of land purchase by indians resolved.

✓ Finally, at their 1949 Congress, the Natal Agricultural Union (NAU) passed a resolution subscribing to the principle of full-time employment and reaffirmed its  
 ✓ recommendation for the universal compulsory application of Chapter 4 of Act 18/1936 (NAU Minutes, 1940-1949).

With the victory of the Nationalist Party in the 1948  
 ✓ White Elections, agriculture acquired a Government that was more sympathetic to its needs than the previous one. A wide range of legislation was passed during the 1950's. Certain of these laws had a greater effect on labour tenants than others:

- ✓ Native Laws Amendment Act (1952) - distinguished between urban (prescribed) and rural (non-prescribed) areas. Movement of africans between the two would be controlled by labour bureaux.
- ✓ Natives (Abolition of Passes) and Co-ordination of Documents Act (1952) - had to carry passes.
- ✓ Amendment of Native Trust and Land Act (1956) - provided for the registration of all labour tenant

- ✓ contracts, established Native Tenant Control Boards
- ✓ to administer it, and prohibited farmers from taking on any more purely rent-paying tenants after 31
- ✓ August 1956 (S.P.P. 1983; Marcus, 1986).

These new laws did not resolve the farmers' situation. Not only were the state controls bureaucratic but labour tenants, individually, were resisting them. Resistance occurred particularly in the area of passes and registration of labour tenant contracts. Labour tenants would rather leave the area than accede to these demands, which was resulting in serious labour shortages (NAU Minutes, 1950-1958). Local Farmers' Associations put pressure on the NAU to lobby the government to resolve the issue. In principle the NAU still endorsed the idea of full-time labour, however, they were now in favour of evolutionary rather than revolutionary changeover. As an outcome of discussions between the Native Affairs Advisory Committee of the NAU and the Minister of Bantu Administration the Minister announced that he would appoint an Interdepartmental Committee of Inquiry to study all aspects of non-European Labour on farms throughout the Union (NAU Minutes, 1958).

Until this point the state had only taken steps to control labour tenancy, however, in the period which followed, the state took steps to eradicate the system.

### 3.4.3 ABOLITION OF LABOUR TENANCY

- ✓ The Committee tabled its report in 1961 and called for the abolition of labour tenancy within seven years. In

- ✓ 1960 there were 42 000 registered labour tenants in Natal (AFRA files).

- ✓ The 1936 Development Trust and Land Act was further amended in 1964. The amendments enabled the Minister of Bantu Affairs

"... to abolish entirely or to limit the system of labour tenancy in any one district by proclamation."

(S.P.P. 1983(4):70/1)

- ✓ In principle proclamations would only be issued once consultation with farmers had taken place and they were favourably disposed to such action. The second aspect of the legislation converted Labour Tenant Control Boards into Labour Control Boards.

- ✓ In June 1966 the first districts were issued with proclamations. Initially these were located in the Orange Free State and Transvaal. By the end of 1968 the Minister announced that labour tenancy had been abolished in 85 districts (S.P.P., 1983(4)).

- ✓ However, in Natal there was opposition from both the farmers and the tenants. The farmers claimed that they could not afford to pay the wages which full-time workers would require and they also feared losing their workforce. As a result of the protests by the NAU (Executive Minutes, document 2/68, 1 February 1968)

- ✓ "The Minister is therefore agreed to give special considerations to the problems of Natal."

- ✓ Thus by the beginning of 1969 only three Natal districts had been deproclaimed: Bergville, Kranskop

and in late 1969 Weenan (S.P.P., 1983(4)). Howick was  
 ✓ deproclaimed some time after Weenan, however, according  
 to S.P.P. (1983(4)) the date is not known.

✓ The abolition of labour tenancy in Bergville and  
 ✓ Kranskop proceeded relatively quietly. However, Weenan  
 was a chaotic upheaval. Those events caused the N.A.U.  
 ✓ to be even more determined to stop the government from  
 abolishing labour tenancy by its 1970 deadline.

✓ As a result of the pressures the government agreed to  
 implement its proposals more gently. Instead of a  
 ✓ complete abolition of labour tenancy it proposed a  
 ✓ freeze on labour tenant contracts. It was declared  
 that from the 31 August 1970, no new labour tenant  
 ✓ contracts could be entered into. At the same time  
 ✓ restrictions on labour tenancy were introduced into the  
 remaining districts in Natal. (Howick is included in  
 this list of remaining districts.) (S.P.P., 1983(4))

Theoretically this meant that farmers could keep  
 tenants whose contracts were already registered.

✓ However, many labour tenants had never been registered  
 and therefore were not protected. Secondly, in terms  
 of the 1936 Development Trust and Land Act, no labour  
 tenant contract was valid for longer than three years.  
 Once more the farmers applied pressure and the  
 ✓ government agreed that the contracts entered into  
 before 1970 would be valid for an unspecified period.  
 ✓ However, despite these concessions, the reality of the  
 period was that,

✓ "Concessions did not protect most labour  
 tenants. Large numbers were evicted during

this period in all the districts mentioned above. The authorities continued to pressure farmers to reduce the numbers of tenants living on land and to register their workers."

(S.P.P., 1983(4):75)

These assertions can be further substantiated if one examines the figures for registered labour tenants in Natal (see Table 1)

TABLE 1: REGISTERED LABOUR TENANTS IN NATAL

	YEAR	NUMBER
	1960	42 000
✓	1971	24 000
	1973	16 000

source: AFRA files.

These figures show a continuous decline in the number of registered labour tenants despite the 'protective' legislation which was passed.

The Riekert Commission (1979) indicated in its report that labour tenancy was at an end. This was despite the fact that

"Several witnesses were of the opinion that the labour tenant system as contemplated in the Act still applied to some extent in Natal."

(Riekert Report, cited in S.P.P., 1983(4):77)

As a result of this, in Government Gazette no 6663 of  
✓ 21 September 1979, Proclamation no 2089 was issued  
which repeated that there were no further labour tenant  
✓ contracts and all those presently valid would  
automatically expire by the 30 August 1980.

#### 3.4.4 CONCLUSION

✓ Not only had labour tenancy been the most prevalent  
form of farm labour in central and northern Natal for  
more than 80 years but it had also been the major  
✓ source of access to land for non-reserve africans. In  
a short space of between 10 and 20 years it had been  
✓ eradicated.

The legislation passed during this period was as a  
result of the struggle by agriculture to ensure a  
✓ stable labour force in the face of competition from  
industrial capital. By 1949 Agriculture knew that the  
✓ answer to their problem lay in the abolition of labour  
tenancy. On the one hand they were putting pressure on  
the government to pass legislation that would lead them  
✓ to this path. On the other hand labour tenants  
themselves were resisting these legislative pressures  
and, by doing so, threatening the farmers with a  
shortage of labour. This, in turn, was forcing the NAU  
✓ to pressure the government to slow down or retract the  
effect of legislation passed. Thus even though  
agricultural capital was the dominant fraction this did  
not entirely resolve their problems. They could lobby

- ✓ for legislation to be passed, but they could not control the terrain of battle between classes. It was the labour tenants control over this terrain, which they maintained by threatening to withdraw their labour
- ✓ power, that forced organised agriculture to pressurise government to modify legislation. The next section examines the response of the Sarmcol workers to this process - a process they saw as a continuation of the land theft begun by the settlers.

### 3.5 SARMCOL AND THE EXPERIENCE OF LABOUR TENANCY

#### 3.5.1. LABOUR TENANCY

- ✓ Seventy-three percent of Sarmcol workers were bllrn into families of labllur tenants on white farms in the magisterial district of Lions River. The 1939 Magistrates' Reports for the Lions River district (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/23/2) claim that the magisterial district was 609 m<sup>2</sup> and the population was as follows: (see Table 2)

TABLE 2: POPULATION FIGURES FOR MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT  
OF LIONS RIVER

	1937	1938	1939
European	2 510	2 510	2 560
Native	17 200	17 200	17 550
Coloured	235	235	250
Asiatics	1 575	1 575	1 650

Source: (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/23/2)

The report continued by claiming that there were no 'native' areas within the magisterial district and that the majority of 'natives' live on 'european' farms under Native Labour Tenant Contracts. It also stated that a 'considerable number of natives' were employed at Sarmcol and lived in certain areas which have become known as "Black Belts". These areas were owned by indians who leased the land to 'natives'. By 1950 the Magistrate (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/16/5) was reporting that there was no real unemployment in Lions River. Farmers were nearly always short of labour and Sarmcol provided employment for 750 native men. S.A.R., ESCOM and GPO construction gangs were continuously active in the area. There was no recruiting for the mines carried out from Lions River.

The names of the areas where the workers were born are names synonymous with the Natal midlands: Tweedie, Balgowan, Nottingham Road, Howick, Dargle and Lions River. However, most people (20 percent) were born in

the area around the town of Howick. Other areas where many people came from were Dargle (12 percent) and Tweedie (10 percent). Fifty percent of these people were born on the same farm as their father.

As most Sarmcol workers are between forty and sixty years of age they would have been born on the farms somewhere between 1926 and 1946. Over the period from the time these people were born until they eventually left the farms, two patterns of proletarianisation can be discerned.

Firstly, there are those who left the farms fairly early and became the residents of Zenzele and later Mpophomeni. That is they relinquished their ties with the land.

"We were born from Dargle, the farm belonged to Mr R. My father and my mother are also from there. From there we moved to Mr S. at Merrivale - also a farm. From there to Zenzele. From Zenzele we came here."

(Interview, Simon Ntombela).

In terms of the periodisation of the previous section the people who fitted into this pattern were usually those who left the farms before 1960. The increasing control over labour tenancy caused their dissatisfaction. Secondly, there are those who stayed on the farms until the mid-1960's to mid-1970's and then moved to the peri-urban areas. So, while they became industrial wage labourers, they never completely severed their ties with the land.

"Mr B. didn't want us to have cattle. So I left and went to Mr S. after that I left and

just came straight here to Impendle. Mr S. sold the farm and went to Joburg. The new employer wanted no cattle there."

(Interview, Dingizwe Ndlela).

Once more, to relate this pattern to the previous periodisation, these people were affected by the abolition of labour tenancy.

From the survey results it is apparent that farmers did not provide much in the way of facilities for the labour tenants resident on the farm. Labour tenants built their own houses, depending upon their requirements. The average size was 3-4 rooms. No toilet facilities were available. Just over half (53 percent) of the labour tenants used the veld. No water was provided; sixty percent of people had either to collect rain water or else fetch it from a river. Most people used candles and for the majority of labour tenants the farmer was the only source of supplies (Magistrate's Report, July 1951, Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 1/15/6)

"We used to buy from him mealie meal and maize".

(Interview, Simon Ntombela).

There were also junior (61 percent) and senior (26 percent) primary schools in the districts, but no high schools. These schools were small, government-aided schools. A large Government School was available at Howick (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, N1/15/6, Magistrates Annual Report to C.N.C., August 1952). Yet the existence of schools did not imply that the

children went to school. As the survey shows, twenty-three percent of the workers had no formal education and 67 percent had an educational level of std 4 or less. The reason for this appears to be twofold:

"I used to go to school and the way to school passed by his ...(the farmers)... place. And once he saw me and stopped and said where do I come from and asked other people and said no I want that boy in the fields here at the farm. And he ordered that on Monday I must come and report work. I never went to school anymore."

(Interview, Simon Ntombela).

"So in fact there is my eldest brother, I am the second to him, he also went to school. As I mentioned my father couldn't afford to pay all these school expenses so he had to leave. And even myself came the stage when I had to leave. So we came to Sarmcol so these old kids and my brother so we had to finance them so they could continue with their education. So it was just a rotation."

(Interview, Godfrey Lubazana).

- ✓ Part of the agreement was that the labour tenants were allowed to keep livestock and were given land to plough. This varied quite significantly both between and within farms. Eighty percent of labour tenants kept
- ✓ chickens (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF CHICKENS

NUMBER OF CHICKENS	PERCENTAGE OF STRIKERS
1- 5	4,7
6-10	19,0
11-20	23,8
21-30	16,6
31-40	7,1
41-50	9,5
over 50	19,0

Thirteen percent kept goats and as in the case of chickens the numbers varied widely (see Table 4).

TABLE 4: NUMBER OF GOATS

NUMBER OF GOATS	PERCENTAGE OF STRIKERS
1- 5	18,1
6-10	27,2
16-20	45,4
21-30	18,1

And 63,6 percent of labour tenants had cattle (see Table 5).

TABLE 5: NUMBER OF CATTLE

NUMBER OF CATTLE	PERCENTAGE OF STRIKERS
1- 5	20,0
6-10	20,0
11-15	3,6
16-20	9,0
21-30	7,2
31-50	3,6
OVER 100	1,8

Most of the labour tenants were given a piece of land on which they could plough. The amount of land was not constant. Most tenants did not have more then half an acre. However, some labour tenants had up to ten acres.

"You ploughed what you wanted"

(Interview, K.P. Gwala).

"... just given a small piece of land"

(Interview, Philip Zondi).

Mealies, potatoes and cabbage were the most common crops cultivated, with the variety depending upon the amount of land available.

The differences between farms has been noted. The following case illustrates that these differences also permeated within a particular farm. Labour tenant A had more then fifty chickens, 16 to 20 goats, 6 to 10 cattle and between 2 and 5 acres of land to plough. While labour tenant B had a few chickens, no goats, 6 to 10 cows and a small plot of land.

Some of the labour tenants reported that there were no restrictions on the number or variety of animals they were allowed to keep (Interviews Detho Sibisi, Simeon Mhlongo). Others stated that there were restrictions (Interview, Simon Ntombelo). While on the other hand some labour tenants were allowed no livestock but were given land to cultivate (Interview Madijizela). These variations in policy seem dependent on the circumstances of the particular farmer - the economic conditions, the size of the land, the purpose for which the farmer wanted to utilise the land etc. However, these conditions were not static, they changed over time on the same farm

To understand life on the farms at that time fully let us examine the following account:

*Detho?*

"It was a big farm and many other families. Some were very big. For instance there was the Shezi family and this man had two wives. And also my uncles, one family there were three of them and all had wives and big houses. He ...(the farmer)... had his cattle which were just grazing openly i.e. wild not being brought back afternoons. We only go to the mountains just to count them once in a while. The limit of cattle for us was five. This was set by the farmer. He never gave any reason. He just said he didn't want africans to have more cattle. He's also got cattle. Our family had cattle but many of us

didn't. I, my brother and my sister. We were the three who were responsible for that farm. We tend to the fields, see to the roads which are done right and then also during the harvest we go and work. Look after the weeds and so on.

Initially we had to work six months outside. Some would go to the other farms and some would go here and work at Sarmcol. They would find the job through relatives and through those people already working at Sarmcol. My father used to work at Sarmcol. Sarmcol never appreciated you if you showed them that you working at the farm. What they used to do is that there were certain indians here at George who used to write to say you had been working for them or just to prove you had nothing to do with the farm system. But finally it got to the position where he ... (the farmer) ... was saying no to the system ... (the six month system).

The farmer was a very obstinate man. He never talked to an african man. He just wanted one person - a representative. He's the only one allowed to whistle, you not allowed to whistle".

(Interview, Simon Ntombela).

Through the in-depth interviews it became clear that the description above is commonplace in the lives of

the majority of labour tenants. They lived on white farms with large extended families. They were required to tend the fields and look after the cattle. In most cases this labour requirement fell on the children, both girls and boys or on young men. Most of the labour tenants received wages for the time they worked on the farms, the Magistrate reports (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 1/15/6) in 1952 that,

"... they naturally do not receive wages as high as those in industry, but on the whole they appear to be well fed and fairly treated."

One consistent factor in all the magistrates' reports (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1) is that in the district of Lions River there is no unemployment.

For some the relationship with the farmer was paternalistic:

"He was a nice man - especially on Christmas Day - he'd give us two cattle for the people who lived on his farm"

(Interview, Dingizwe Ndlele).

"He was a kind man because at Christmas he gave us some presents, gave the children sweets."

(Interview, Simeon Mhlango)

Others had a harsher experience. Where this was the case, the labour tenants tried to find other farms. Given the fact that 50 percent of labour tenants were born on the same farms as their grandfathers, this

period seems to have been the most nomadic that their families had experienced for generations. However, what is striking about the experiences of these labour tenants is the similarity between their lives and the accounts contained in Bradford's work (1987a, b); families at least two decades apart and a county away.

### 3.5.2. RELATIONSHIP TO SARMCOL

An integral part of the labour tenant experience was the six month system. For most of the present-day Sarmcol workers this was inextricably tied to Sarmcol. Coming from a common individual experience of land alienation these labour tenants were now brought together into a common experience of exploitation. This would provide them with a common identity around which their 'cultural formations' would be forged.

From the interviews it became apparent that a number of members of the extended family were required to work on the farm while the older men (i.e. the father or uncles) worked six month contracts at Sarmcol.

However, it was not always easy for 'farmworkers' to be employed at Sarmcol. Some workers interviewed reported that they 'just used to go to the gate and they were employed'. However, on closer examination, it seems as if these were workers that began at Sarmcol in the 1940's. Workers who worked full-time from the 1950's claimed,

✓ "that management favoured farm workers because they could go away and come back and still find jobs kept open."

(Interview, Madijizela).

This explanation fits into Sarmcol's description as a jobbing factory. When they had large contracts they ✓ would employ more workers, and would 'release' them after the contract was complete. Labour tenants who were only available for six months were ideal for this ✓ type of labour requirement, particularly during a time when most of the work was heavy manual labour (see chapter 4).

With the legislation passed in the 1950's, pertaining to the restriction on movement between prescribed and ✓ non-prescribed areas, and passes i.e. Native Laws Amendment Act, and Natives (Abolition of Passes) and ✓ Co-ordination of Documents Act the choices of the labour tenants became more restricted. For these workers there were two ways around the problem. Either they organized a letter from George; they would get an "indian" to write a letter which stated that they were/or had been employed by him<sup>9</sup>, or,

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9. The Minutes of the NAU are full of complaints, by farmers, of africans - particularly labour tenants, ✓ using a variety of means to get around the controls, passes and identity documents and thereby escape their tenant duties.

"Not many people could go to work for Sarmcol because they were using the reference blllok for one chap so he was only allowed to go and work at Sarmcol. They were using written reference books. So if one of them have that type of reference book he can borrow another one to go and work. ...My brother got to work at Sarmcol because he borrowed another chaps reference blllok because there was no photo at that time for reference blllok."

(Interview, Detho Sibisi).

Thus while, on the one hand, the state was attempting to control and restrict labour tenancy in order to secure a workforce for the farms, on the other hand, labour tenants were finding ways around these restrictions, and industry, in this particular case Sarmcol, was not being too particular. An interesting piece of information, from which it is only possible to speculate, is the list of applications for pass exemptions for the year 1947 (Natal Archives 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, N1/10/3). The majority of the applications are for exemptions to work at the Sarmcol factory, of these 16 applications, only one indicates that he was a labour tenant. However, only verbal descriptions of the applicant e.g. 'slanty eyes, narrow eyes, wide eyes, tick appropriate' are utilised on the forms - there are no photographs.

### 3.5.3. THE EROSION OF THE LABOUR TENANCY SYSTEM

According to the outline of the previous section the

- ✓ process which led to the abolition of labour tenancy
- ✓ happened fairly systematically. In the 1950's there
- ✓ were certain moves to control labour tenancy. In 1964
- the Development and Trust Land Act (1934) was amended
- ✓ which gave the Minister the power to abolish labour
- ✓ tenancy in any district by proclamation. In 1970
- conditions in Natal were moderated, yet by 1980 labour
- ✓ tenancy had been eradicated.

However, when labour tenants in the Lions River district are interviewed, the picture which emerges is not as clear-cut as that outlined above. It is

- ✓ possible that this is the case because the abolition of
- labour tenancy was never as decisive, as for example,
- in Weenan. Lions River was deproclaimed some time at
- ✓ the end of 1969, beginning of 1970, and soon after
- ✓ that, Proclamation G.N. 1224 31/7/70 was issued which
- watered down the implementation of abolition.

In my research I have found that there was a slow

- ✓ process of erosion which took place from the early
- 1950's until the mid 1970's. The labour tenancy system
- was eroded from three sides:

1. the abolition of the six month system
- ✓ 2. restrictions on the keeping of cattle, and
3. to a larger extent restrictions on land available
- for ploughing.

The successful implementation of this process, or the

- ✓ complete abolition of labour tenancy, would have meant
- that the individual would have become a wage worker,
- either urban or rural with no access to the land.

At this juncture it seems as if the Sarmcol workers went two separate ways:

1. There were those that accepted. They sold their cattle, some members of the family worked permanently at Sarmcol while others worked permanently on the farm. And soon they left the farm and moved to Zenzele with their families. The second place of residence for 48 percent of the workers was Zenzele while, for only 25 percent, it was white farms
2. Then there were those that refused to yield to the situation. Not that this was overt or organized in any way<sup>10</sup>. They as individuals refused to accept the restrictions on their cattle<sup>11</sup>. So they found a farm which would accept cattle. And when that farmer imposed restrictions they found another. These were the people that moved to the peri-urban areas of locations.

It seems as if the six-month system was fairly systematically and evenly done away with. However, the

10 For an explanation of hidden forms of resistance and consciousness see Cohen, 1980.

11. This informal resistance should not be seen as occurring in isolation. People do talk, and through informal networks - churches, shebeens etc - the word spreads.

restrictions upon cattle was much more gradual and  
 ✓ there are cases of people having cattle right up till  
 the time they left the farms in the mid-1970's.  
 Restriction on access to land never seemed to have  
 manifested itself prominently. However, it seems that,  
 ✓ whichever decision the people took, an important  
 consideration was the low wages the farmers payed  
 (Interview).

### 3.5.3.1 Cattle, Labour Tenancy and Wage Labour - The Struggle of Resisting Proleterianisation

The imposition of restrictions varied from farm to farm  
 both in severity and date of implementation. However,  
 ✓ once the restrictions affected their cattle, the labour  
 tenants took some kind of decisive action.

People moved from farm to farm making choices about  
 ✓ staying or leaving depending on the farmer's attitude  
 to their cattle.

"My father quarrelled with the induna and we  
 went away to a farm near Sobantu. We went  
 there because that farmer was allowing people  
 to keep cattle. We stayed there five or six  
 years. Then came a time when the farmer says  
 all the people, his employees must reduce  
 their cows, thats why he decided to move  
 again."

(Interview, Moses Madalala).

It was at this point that people were forced to make a  
 choice; either they could agree to sell their cattle

and become wage workers on the farm or they could keep their cattle and move to some peri-urban area (e.g. Nxamalala, Mashingeni) or a location (e.g. Impendle) and become wage workers in industry.

At this conjuncture it is necessary to elaborate upon the importance of cattle to the people's culture and economy. Firstly, cattle were vital to the reproduction of the household. They were used as payment for lobola for wives. Thus, not only were cattle important in obtaining labour power for the cultivating of crops, but they also continued the cycle of transforming male workers into homestead heads. Secondly, cattle were needed as draught animals, producers of milk, meat, fuel, hides, calves and for religious and cultural ceremonies (Slater, 1980; Bradford, 1987b).

"As stores of wealth and items of trade, they were also keys to political authority and social differentiation ... (not to forget patriarchy) ... prime importance was attached to herds, because 'cattle beget children' and 'a man is no man unless he has a cow'."

(Bradford 1987b:58).

It was for these reasons that labour tenants were prepared to explore every potential that presented itself. They would leave farms, move into the reserves or accept, as labour tenants, lower wages and harsher conditions in order to keep their cattle.

In resisting the restrictions imposed upon them by the farmers, one aspect becomes very important and that is

✓ the relationship/conception which that individual had with/of the chief. According to official documents all the labour tenants in the Lions River district fell under the jurisdiction of some chief. In a 1940 census ✓ six chiefs are listed (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/23/2). However, in his 1951 annual report (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/16/5) the magistrate reported that the

"followers of the seven tribes in the district are scattered all over the farms."

The correct position seems to be unclear. The official records list as a chief one James Khumalo (Magistrates Report to C.N.C. December 1940, Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/23/2), yet his grandson claims that in fact, he was not a chief in his own right but an induna for Nxamalala (Interview, Stephen Khumalo, August 1986). Other workers interviewed either say that they were farm workers and they had no chief or that the ✓ chief under which they fell was Nxamalala Zuma.

"Africans they got a chief. Doesn't matter if they on the farms but they know that I'm a Nxamalala, a Nadi. My family is Nxamalala. My father is going to his chief at Impendle. And myself I mustn't go to another chief, I must go to Nxamalala."

(Interview, Simeon Mhlongo).

✓ So those who had some conception of Impendle and the fact that they fell under Nxamalala went there when the restrictions imposed on the labour tenants began to bite. NB

Even at Impendle they could not escape the restrictions

"When I came we were just scattered all around Impendle you just build where you want. Later the government came and said we must build here and there - got us together. So those places were just left untended. Got us together to live in settlements. We had many fields to plough so when the government came and said get together and allocated what is called a hectare and we lost other fields. That was changed into belling veld. A place where if you have cattle or a horse it will graze there. ... People wanted to fight. And King (chief) Mjonwcane halted the fight. He said this is a government's law. People then didn't continue. ... There's crying now. Its no good now, its just not like before."

(Interview, Ndombese Mkize).

✓ Even when they went to land that belonged to their chief it was taken away.

And for those people to whom the chief was alienable, there was the option of the semi-urban areas between Pietermaritzburg and Howick<sup>12</sup>

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12. Apart from the Zwartkop Location this area did not fall under the original reserves. It was later incorporated into Kwa-Zulu. This whole peri-urban area was controlled by a number of chiefs and/or indunas (Interviews).

When asked why they left the farm; 32 percent replied that there was work but the wages were low, 20 percent because they were evicted by the farmer and 12 percent because they were moved by the government. It should be noted that the issue of low wages cannot be divorced from the abolition of labour tenancy. As a labour tenant the individual had a chance of supplementing their income in the six months away from the farm, growing crops and keeping cattle. However, when given the choice of leaving the farm or becoming a full-time farm worker at a low wage, in many cases, they chose the former. This point is further substantiated by research done by S.P.P. (1983(4)),

In fact when we look at when the present workers started working at Sarmcol, 46 percent of those whose previous residence was a white farm began to work at Sarmcol between 1966 and 1975. Not only was this a time when Sarmcol was expanding (see chapter 4) but it was also a period when many people finally left the farms. But what should be stressed is that, while these two figures coincide, it does not mean that these people had no contact with Sarmcol prior to this. As shown above, there is a history of contact with, and employment at, Sarmcol. It became obvious from the interviews that once the six-month system had been discarded some members of the family, usually the father or older brothers, continued to work at Sarmcol, while the rest of the family members worked on the farm. 42 percent of people whose previous residence was a farm started at Sarmcol between 1941 and 1965.

Thus it does seem that these people were finally forced  
 ✓ off the farms by the legislation and restrictions  
 connected with the abolition of labour tenancy.  
 However, this process was not as clear-cut as one would  
 imagine by reading through the legislation.

### 3.5.3.2 Removal and Relocation - The Fate of the Urban Worker

Those people who left the farms earlier were the ones  
 affected by the legislation passed in the 1950's. By  
 the time the restrictions associated with the abllition  
 ✓ of labour tenancy were being imposed they were no  
 longer labour tenants.

As pointed out above the magistrate's report for 1939  
 (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/23/2) informed that  
 the considerable number of africans employed by Sarmcol  
 were forced to live in the "Black Belts"<sup>13</sup>. The report

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13 "Black Belts" were also a source of constant concern  
 to the farmers. Africans who were leaving the  
 farms illegally were residing in these areas while  
 they worked in industry. During the 1940's farmers  
 seemed to point to the existence of these Black  
 Belts as one of the primary causes of the labour  
 shortage. Due to pressure from the NAU the 1946  
 Asiatic Land Tenure Act was passed - its purpose  
 was to resolve the issue of "Black Belts" (NAU  
 Minutes).

continues,

"In this connection the Urbanised Areas Administration Commission having submitted certain proposals which include(d) the incorporation of these "Black Belts" within the boundaries of the Town Board. It is considered that if the Howick Town Board could be persuaded to move more quickly in the creation of suitable Native houses in the local location, the housing difficulty could be more easily overcome. A suggestion to the General Manager of Sarmcol that the company should establish its own private location would no doubt be given favourable consideration ..."

The problem of african housing was one which had occupied the Howick Town Board for many decades. The first reference is found in the Town Board Minutes of October 1928 (Natal Archives, Howick Town Board Minutes 1/1/1/2) where the Native Affairs Commission was invited to meet the Board and discuss the establishment of a 'Native' Location for the town. In November 1928 the Town Board Chairman was asked to set up a meeting with Sarmcol to discuss the question of housing for their 'native' employees. However, a year later in November 1930 (Natal Archives, Howick Town Board Minutes, 1/1/1/3) the Town Board received a petition signed by S.E. Vilakazi and 44 'native' tenants in the

township asking for the establishment of a 'native village'. The Town Board responded by stating that Sarmcol was erecting housing for its employees which they hoped would ease the congestion. If the situation was still inadequate the Board would reconsider. In April 1931 the Howick Town Board noted that the Sarmcol Compound would be finished the following month and house 75 'natives'. Three years later in May 1934 (Natal Archives, Howick Town Board Minutes, 1/1/1/4) the Board noted that the matter of the 'native' location had been discussed previously but that nothing had come of it. They agreed it was necessary to establish a 'native' village and even proposed a site. A year was to pass before the issue appeared on their agenda again. In February 1935 they agreed on the site and decided to build 60 houses - half first - the rental would be between 14/- and 16/- shillings per month. Two months later an outline of the scheme was submitted to the Minister of Native Affairs. Sarmcol wrote a letter to the Board at the end of that year asking the Board to consider a scheme for the erection of dwelling houses in the township. A year after their submission to the Minister of Native Affairs they received a letter notifying them that the Minister had approved the loan. At last in the meeting of November 1937 (Natal Archives, Howick Town Board Minutes, 1/1/1/5) the Board "recommended that attention be given to the letting of the Native dwellings."

Ten years later the Lions River Magistrates Location Report (Natal Archives 1/HWK, 3/2/3/2/1, N28/60) stated that the 'Native' Location was approximately one mile

from the center of town and conveniently situated in relation to Sarmcol. No transport was required. There are 53 houses in the location. Street lighting was not provided. There were no recreation facilities. The plots were 60 feet by 80 feet each. And location residents were not allowed to keep stock. At Sarmcol there was accommodation available for a total of 256 employees in three brick compounds plus one older compound.

✓ This was the housing situation which faced the labour tenants who arrived in Howick seeking accommodation after being employed by Sarmcol. Yet most of the labour tenants found accommodation in the "Black Belts". It was likely that accommodation in the Location was only for families, whereas the families of ✓ labour tenants would still be on the farm and they would only require short-term accommodation for themselves<sup>14</sup>.

Howick West was occupied by two groups of Sarmcol workers: those who left the farms fairly early and those who were coming from areas quite far away eg

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14 This was another complaint of the farmers. Industry was getting the labour while farmers were dumped with the families. They tried, unsuccessfully, to get housing built near industry so that families would move with the workers.

Bergville. According to my research the previous residence of 9,8 percent of the workers was Howick West. Of these people, 71,4 percent started at Sarmcol between 1941 and 1960. Howick West or George was a place, to quote the magistrates' report, (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/23/2) where,

"a considerable number of natives employed at Sarmcol find residence on certain areas which have become known as 'Black Belts'. These areas have been sold to indians who in turn leased land to natives."

The majority of the Sarmcol workers who lived in Howick West had one-roomed houses (66,7 percent). 85,7 percent used nightsoil, and access to water was limited to taps in the streets. Candles were the only source of light for residents. Most of the roads were sand, however, a few were gravel or tar. Street lighting was very limited.

Not many facilities were provided by the authorities. There was a community hall and a clinic which was originally run by Greys Hospital and later taken over in 1952 by the Local Health Commission<sup>15</sup> (Natal).

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15 The Lions River Agriculture Division requested the NAU to take up the sudden closure of the clinic with the Provincial Medical Director. As a result it was taken over by the Local Health Committee (NAU Minutes, 7 November 1951).

Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, 2/16/5, N1/15/6, Magistrates Annual Report 1950 and 1952). A school which could accommodate 500 pupils in the lower standards was available (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, N1/15/6, Magistrates' Annual Report, 1952). No High School was provided. In 1958 a new school was built for the Indian Community in Howick West. It accommodated 500 children (Lions River Advertiser, September 1958).

Given the general nature of the area it was possible for residents to keep livestock and plant some crops. Fifty-seven percent kept chickens (the size of the ✓ flocks varied considerably); fourteen percent kept goats; and fourteen percent had cattle. Yet the numbers of larger livestock was limited. Most of the ✓ workers, seventy-one percent who lived in Howick West, grew some type of crops. The size of land available varied between a small patch and 1 acre. The most common crops were mealies, potatoes and cabbages.

However, a better idea of the place, its life and atmosphere is obtained if one listens to an account given by an old resident.

"It was named George after the name of another white man who used to stay there and that white man was taken out from there. Indians were given that place to live there who had taken blacks to stay there. So it was called George after that man. ... It was a terrible life to stay at George, because we used to live in the muddy place and when its raining the mud just used to

fall down, and we have to somehow put the dakha on the house because when you are not putting the dakha those indians, who were the landlords, used to complain and say 'we will be taken out if we don't rebuild your dakha rooms', it was really terrible. People used to fight all the time. ... It was a really dangerous place because at night you wouldn't just go around the place. ... There were some gangsters, small groups of people calling them separate names. ... People were all the same there, there was that same same behaviour. Because there was a lot of drinking at that place, selling of beer ... sheebens. It was almost a shebeen place. ... You wouldn't risk at night just going alone. ... There were people who used to come to where there were a lot of people and play some old instruments and they used to just entertain the people so that they used to get some beer. And they are the people who used to go outside at night and make a group of people and hit the people."

(Interview, Godfrey Lubazana).

George, and the other shack areas of Hobabe and Zenzele, were vibrant areas, common to many of South Africa's cities during the 1950's - places of mud, politics, beer, music, police raids and crime.

In 1951 the Magistrate filed the following report (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, N9/9/2) on housing in the magisterial district. The Howick Location had a

- ✓ population of 1320 people as of 31 December 1951. At present there were 77 completed houses which all belonged to the local authority. A further 100 houses would be required immediately to meet the shortage with a further 100 being built over the next ten years. He also lists the following "Black Belts" with the number of houses in each area: Cedara (99), Lions River (239), Howick West (1180), Lidgetton West (139), Tweedie (48) and Rosetta (439). 18,1 percent of Sarmcol workers listed their previous residence as being in one of these "Black Belts". The question of housing needs for these people was seen as 'not applicable'. These areas were to become the targets of future relocations (see below).

- The Group Areas Act was passed in 1950 and the Group Areas Consolidation Act of 1957 was aimed at compartmentalising and separating various race groups (Roux, 1964). The first rumblings of this notorious act were heard in Howick in January 1959 when the Howick Town Board refused to consider applications for the sub-division of indian-owned land until the Group Areas Board had given their determination (Lions River Advertiser, January 1959). It was not until 1960 that the Group Areas Board decided to visit Howick as they were "now at the stage where they could undertake the zoning of Howick" (Lions River Advertiser, August 1960). Then in November 1964 the Group Areas Board decided - Howick West would be proclaimed an indian group area (Lions River Advertiser, November 1964).
- ✓ Nevertheless, two years later, in 1966 Howick was proclaimed a white group area (S.P.P., 1983(4)). This

led to the removal of the african residents of George and placed the 'indian' and 'coloureds' under threat until a group area was proclaimed for them in 1979.

Fifty percent of these people moved/were moved to Mpophomeni<sup>16</sup>. They moved gradually over the period after 1968. Also, there seems to have been some movement to Howick South (a new development) in the 1980's. This was related to the creation of the coloured group area. Few people took the option, during the time of the removals to Mpophomeni, to leave the urban areas and settle in the more rural places.

Zenzele was the second place of residence for 48,0 percent of the workers. The establishment of Zenzele, which means 'do it yourself' was a temporary measure to ease the housing shortage (see above) in Howick. The exact date of establishment has not been ascertained, however, there is evidence of residency in Zenzele from the late 1940's (Natal Witness report, cited in S.P.P., 1983(4)). The Howick Town Board allowed africans with jobs in Howick to rent sites and build houses according to approved plans. By 1964 it was thought that over 4000 africans lived at Zenzele (Lions River Advertiser, June 1964). The type of housing was very varied from 1

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16 Mpophomeni is the present home of 40 percent of the workers.

room to more than 10 rooms<sup>17</sup>.

No infrastructure was developed. Ninety percent of residents used nightsoil and their only access to water was through a tap in the street. Most people used candles (80 percent), however, there was a larger proportion of people using other sources of power e.g. paraffin, gas etc. Most of the roads were sand. The streets were not lit. Not many facilities were provided for the community (16,7 percent claim that there was a clinic), other than that, a school catering for the junior and senior primary level was provided.

✓ Given the nature of Zenzele, residents were able to keep greater quantities of livestock and they had access to larger pieces of land than they do today. 43 percent kept chickens. The size of the flocks were quite varied<sup>18</sup>. Ten percent of people owned goats, however, only three percent owned any cattle.

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17 40 percent of residents lived in one room houses, 30 percent in six roomed houses, 10 percent in five roomed houses and 6.7 percent with more than ten rooms.

18 6,7 percent had between one and five, ten percent between six and ten, and eight percent between thirty-one and forty.

Most residents (70 percent) planted some vegetables. The majority had small plots (70 percent), however, a few people had larger pieces of land. The main crops which were utilised by the household, were mealies, potatoes and cabbage.

Zenzele was one of the townships which was affected by 'urban relocation'. This policy outlined in General Circular No 25 1967 involved the,

"deproclamation of african townships falling within prescribed (urban) areas and the removal of their residents to newly created townships in the bantustans"

(S.P.P. 1983(4):170)

✓ To accommodate the residents of Zenzele, Mpophomeni was { built, just inside the borders of KwaZulu.

The Howick Town Board began discussing the construction of a new 'native' Township in the late 1950's. The Lions River Advertiser reported in March 1958 that 'Mr M. Slatter had rejected the Town Board's offer of 30 000 pounds for his farm which the Board required for the proposed Native Township'. However, a year later the Town Board had found another site. The Minister of Native Affairs authorised the Town Board to proceed with the site plan. The housing plots would be 40 feet by 70 feet and the trading sites 20 feet by 50 feet. A maximum of 250 pounds loan per house was approved (Lions River Advertiser, January 1959). Disaster struck a few months later. There were rumours of the construction of a dam in the Tweedie area; and the farm Midmar at Tweedie Bridge had been sold to the

Pietermaritzburg Corporation. If a dam was built on this site it would create an area under water which would include sections of Lions River itself. However, reported the Lions River Advertiser (March 1959), it was not known if the selected site would affect the development of Howick's New Native Location. As a precaution the Town Board suspended all development. A few months later the announcement was made that the site of the dam and the new "Native" Location were one and the same (Lions River Advertiser, August 1959). There was a great outcry in the Press that such an affair could occur. That over the heads of a plan which already had the approval of the Minister of Native Affairs, the Pietermaritzburg Town Council could go ahead with the Midmar Dam construction. Midmar Dam flooded a portion of the Zenzele Location and inhabitants of that section were given three months notice (Lions River Advertiser, March 1963). Further land occupied by Zenzele was also required for the construction of the dam. The state agreed to compensate the dislocated inhabitants. However, compensation was only payable to owners living in buildings (Lions River Advertiser, February 1964). This meant that tenants, owners who didn't live in their houses or those who lived in dwellings not considered "buildings", were not eligible for compensation.

Meanwhile, the Howick Town Board had condemned "shacks and hovels" which were occupied by africans in central Howick (Lions River Advertiser, May 1962). While there is no direct reference to the name of this place or its

exact location, it is thought that the reference is to Hohabe - a mixed race slumland close to Mevana (the original 'native' location) (Interview Madijizela). The Town Board temporarily allocated a site at Zenzele to the owners of the demolished shacks (Lions River Advertiser, July 1962).

Only certain sections of Zenzele were affected by the building of Midmar Dam. The fate of the rest of the township awaited the finalisation of the 'New Native Location'. The site of this township was once more open to debate. And debate it was. In the opinion of the white residents of Howick the township should be as far removed from themselves as possible. Every proposed site was criticised; the most radical suggestion was that all 'natives' should be moved to the reserves. The Lions River Agriculture Union through the NAU made angry representations to the Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development (NAU Minutes 1960-1963). However, the reality was that Sarmcol needed labour and labour needed to reproduce itself (Lions River Advertiser)<sup>19</sup>.

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19 In an attempt to resolve the issue, meetings were held between the Department of Bantu Affairs and Development and interested parties which included the NAU, Howick Town Board, Lions River Agricultural Union, and BTR Sarmcol.

In May 1963 the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development informed the Howick Town Council that it could proceed to acquire a portion of the farm 'Montrose' owned by the late Mr Lund for the establishment of the 'Bantu' Township (Lions River Advertiser, February 1964). The new location would share a border with the Swartkop Reserve. There would be a 200 yard buffer zone around the township which would be located down the Boston Road. This was Mpophomeni. It was expected that africans living at Howick West, Tweedie, Lions River, Lidgetton and Cedara would be removed to the new area. However, the first priority, once the township was constructed, was the removal of illegal squatters in and around Howick. The third target group for occupation of Mpophomeni was the demolition of 200 or more houses in the temporary housing scheme at Zenzele. To counter-balance its distance from Howick and the B.T.R. Sarmcol factory a ✓ tar access road would be built and transport subsidised (Lions River Advertiser, June 1964).

When the government forced the Zenzele residents to move the majority of them went to Mpophomeni (81,8 percent). While a few moved in the early seventies, ✓ most people moved after 1978 with the highest point being 1979 (24,4 percent). In the early part of the 1970's isolated individuals moved to areas where it seems that it was possible to have a freer type of life (i.e. more land to plough and livestock).

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

The present day Lions River district was one of the first areas to be expropriated by white settlers. By 1910 the basic pattern of land tenure in Natal had been established. While individual tenure was not racially restricted, in reality most african access to land was either restricted to the reserves, or to some kind of ✓ tenancy relationship on white-owned land. By the early twentieth century, in most cases, this was labour tenancy.

Shortly after the establishment of Union the 1913 Land Act was passed. This had widespread implications for african land tenure and was used as a base on which future land legislation could be built. Throughout the twentieth century various legislation was passed which slowly tightened controls over labour tenancy. In the 1960's labour tenancy was abolished forcing labour ✓ tenants to become wage labourers - their only option being rural or urban.

The majority of present day Sarmcol workers started their lives as labour tenants on white farms in the Lions River Magisterial District. As labour tenants they had access to land and therefore the choice of keeping livestock and ploughing. At the same time they ✓ had their toes in the urban labour market through working six month contracts at Sarmcol.

However, the legislation passed had an effect on their lives. On the one hand there were the restrictions

opportunities than the rural wage labour into which they were being forced. The only difference between them is when they reached that decision. For some it was by the 1950's and for others it was in the mid-1970's. These experiences of dislocation from the land and relocation in the urban areas have had a major effect on the consciousness of the Sarmcol workers and the way their world is explained and understood. It ✓ has also given a base or a starting point from which a common identity shaped in suffering can be drawn. This will be discussed in greater detail below (see Chapter 8).

## CHAPTER 4   BTR SARMCOL

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Industrial demand and Apartheid labour policy gave birth to the township of Mpophomeni (see chapter 3); before long it became Sarmcol's labour pool, and in a short span of time its labour dumping ground. Working at this firm was another central pillar of common experience binding the workers together. Sarmcol had given the workers experiences of exploitation, hardship and suffering but it has also given them experiences of intervention and trade union organisation. Furthermore, BTR has been a major structural force, not only in the lives of the workers but also in the Howick and Lions River area.

The Sarmcol factory started up at Howick in 1919. After an initial attempt to establish themselves on the Witwatersrand, its founders made contact with Spencer Moulton & Co, who agreed to invest money in Sarmcol. Soon after the influx of British money, Sarmcol decided to move to Howick, due to its "natural" attractions:

"... the prospect of generating current from the waterfall, combined with the availability of cheap land and plentiful labour, black and

asian, had turned the attention of Sarmcol to Howick."

(Rosenthal, 1981:27)

The original factory covered 50 000 square feet and cost nearly 50 000 to erect. A power station which was constructed to obtain electricity from the falls, still provides some of Sarmcol's power requirements. Until 1930 the company faced continual financial difficulty. Eventually in 1928 it was sold and the controlling interest passed to the Leyland & Birmingham Rubber Co Ltd of Lancashire.

Initially they manufactured hoses, belts, rubber and asbestos, packing and trimming. Later there was a brief incursion into tyre manufacturing. Essentially it was a jobbing factory: manufacturing mainly rubber products according to orders received, with little specialisation or standardisation occurring for some time. Consequently the labour force fluctuated in size depending on the demand for goods. Workers were hired for a few months, fired once the order had been completed, only to be re-hired when production increased. (Interviews)

In 1972 British Tyre and Rubber (BTR), one of the largest multi-national corporations in the UK and among the 10 largest multinationals in Europe, bought the controlling interest in Sarmcol. In line with their international policy this signalled the beginning of an intense programme of expansion and automation. The effect of this rationalisation of its labour processes

has been a substantial overall reduction in the labour force from an average of 4 500 in the early 1970's to a mere 1 300 by the time of the strike, to fewer than 1000 after the employment of scab labour (LMG, 1985).

This chapter aims to relate this history. It is argued that, in order to understand the strike (see chapters 6 & 7) and the determination of the workers to win their demands, one has to understand the experiences of working for Sarmcol - the harsh, regimented labour process, rationalisation and its accompanying arbitrary retrenchment. But further than that, it is argued in chapter 8 that this struggle against a symbol of international capitalism has shaped consciousness in a particular political direction.

#### 4.2 WORKING FOR SARMCOL

This forward march, through fifty years of development, left a distinctive trail of hardship in the memory of its workers. Given that most of them have been long-service employees, it is possible to turn to some of their memories, together with company and newspaper reports, for its reconstruction.

As argued above, Sarmcol was essentially a jobbing factory. The first changes to affect the labour process began in the early 1930's when Sarmcol started to investigate time and motion studies, which resulted

in the reorganisation of the factory. Important new equipment was installed - a vulcanising press, a new mixing mill, an electrically driven screen replace the hand screen for whiting and other powders, the store was enlarged and a quality laboratory was designed. Working experience can be traced back to 1932 when work was both physical and crude in nature:

"It was very difficult work. At that time all the heavy jobs, like carrying heavy pipes, wrapping them with canvass, and all of it was done by hand. It was very heavy at that time. If the pipes come out of the pots, you strip it off and it was so hot we used to burn our fingers because when the pipe gets cold you couldn't take the canvass off."

(Interview, Ntombela).

By 1936 Sarmcol employed some 450 people,

By the time the Second World War broke out in 1939 Sarmcol was well established. It was declared an essential industry and supplied a large variety of war goods (Natal Witness, 15 February 1968). As a result Sarmcol was able to introduce new machinery and further expand. By 1951 its workforce exceeded 1 000. For many this meant new jobs and thus employment; yet, for workers entering the industry for the first time, satisfaction with getting employment was sooner or later harshly tempered:

"At first when I was employed at Sarmcol I thought, hey, I was just a lucky man, now I'll earn a lot of money. Only to find out.

I was given a certain machine to operate, that machine was cutting small rings in different sizes and there were drums that I was compelled to fill. At that time the foreman of the department was Mr Masisang and we used to sweat like hell getting those drums full. Again we were told if we don't fill those drums we are out."

(Interview, Godfrey Lubazana)

Sarmcol's expansion stabilised for only a brief period in the 1950's. By the late 1950's a new phase of expansion was underway. A number of new departments were initiated owing to new demands, while others were amalgamated and reorganised (see above). Despite the company's expansion and growth in employment, its labour processes did not change much:

"At that time the job was still very hard/difficult because most of the job was held by hand unlike today when there are chains. Some of the job are pulled by chains."

(Interview, Godfrey Lubazana).

As a result, by 1962, the value of production at the factory was 10 times what it had been in 1939. During the 1960's the company once more undertook a large expansion program. This included the construction of 3 large new factory buildings increasing the floor space by 75 000 square feet. By this time Sarmcol was employing 2 600 people at the Howick plant (Natal Witness, 15 February 1968). However, a year later they

were employing nearly 3 000 people Natal Witness, 25 April 1969). During this period most of the top management were sent directly from Leyland and Birmingham Rubber Co to manage Sarmcol.

In 1972 British Tyre and Rubber Company (BTR) bought the controlling interest in Sarmcol (Star, 1 April 1985). Sarmcol stood at its peak in employment in the early 1970's, however, in line with BTR's international policy, a new wave of growth and rationalisation was introduced. Worldwide BTR turns over R5 000 million on five continents in 216 countries<sup>20</sup>. It has investments in most Commonwealth countries, the USA and South Africa (BTR UK Company Records, 1979-1986 and press clippings from the TURP, UND).

The purchase of Sarmcol by BTR was to have major implications for the Sarmcol workers.

"BTR is a 'dawn-raider', buying up and selling off companies with only short-term profits in mind. BTR is also militantly hostile to trade unions and has been described by a leading British trade unionist as 'back in the dark ages'."

claimed the International Labour Reports (1987:15).

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20. Its holdings include firms like Cornhill Insurance, Pretty Polly Tights, Dunlop Holdings, Pan Books and Heinemann Books (the latter until last year).

The 1974 Annual Report of BTR South Africa (1974:5) described BTR as

"... a holding company, and its subsidiary companies are engaged in the manufacture of a wide range of industrial rubber and plastic products, as well as rail fastening components. A subsidiary group of companies markets and services a wide range of mining and general engineering equipment as well as diesel engines and transmissions, earthmoving, material and timber handling equipment. The group's principal customers are the mining, manufacturing, automotive, footwear and engineering industries as well as government including South African and Rhodesian Railways and other public utility undertakings."

The rubber and plastics division had enjoyed a steady demand for its products during 1974. To cope with the demand additional manufacturing equipment was purchased. Other sectors of the factory had also faced heavy demands. Sarmcol management decided it was time to overhaul and modernise all equipment and facilities. (BTR Annual Report, 1974).

According to management the benefits of investing in the capital equipment were immediately visible. The following year sales increased by 32 percent (BTR Annual Report, 1975). However, for the workers there were no benefits,

"My father was there, that's why I remember. It was 1975, 1973 ja that time they make 3 shifts specially I remember Hose I, my father was there."~

(Interview, Simon Ngubane)

By 1976 Sarmcol's major customers were to be found in the government or quasi-government sectors. As a result the company was severely hit by the change in the economic climate, as a result of political conditions. A number of their orders were cancelled or deferred. Sarmcol responded to this by attempting to curtail production orders and certain sectors which had suffered a loss of orders went onto a four-day week. During 1977 the four-day week continued and the factory remained closed for an extra week over December. However, Sarmcol used the opportunity to reorganise and rationalise production (BTR Annual Reports 1976 & 1977).

In June 1977 a new plant opened. This produced solid, woven conveyor belting. Previously this belting which was required by SASOL 1 was imported. Thus Sarmcol received substantial orders. A continuous process manufacturing textile braided hose was also introduced (BTR Annual Report, 1977).

Belting continued to be unaffected by the economic climate. In 1978 Sarmcol commissioned the building of a long-length hydraulic hose line. In 1979 it introduced a high-strength single-ply conveyor belting (BTR Annual Report, 1978). The 1979 Annual Report stated that the

hydraulic hose division was working to its full capacity and that there were plans to increase the capacity of the division substantially. In 1980 Sarmcol introduced a large range of portable tanks and various other new products.

"... big tanks for water, maybe its 50 000l, its for the SADF to keep water for the soldiers."

(Interview, Simon Ngubane).

Sarmcol reported that 1980 was its most successful financial year. It committed itself to capital expenditure in regard both to plant and equipment.

Workers found that while the pace of work did not change<sup>21</sup>, the work was becoming easier through sophisticated mechanisation. They started to experience the reality of semi-automation and the beginnings of mass lay-offs. Workers were daily discovering the sting in the tail of automation. The work process had become progressively easier, but fewer workers were needed. Lay-offs started. Management claimed publicly that retrenchment was the result of the economic recession.

While the recession most probably did play a role the implications of automation cannot be underplayed.

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21. This was despite the generally poor economic climate in the late 1970's.

During the early 1980's Sarmcol introduced a number of new lines. In the first half of 1981 Sarmcol commissioned a 2,5 m wide steel and belting line. A completely new rubber mixing complex was also started. In the 1982 Annual Report (1982:3) the Chair`man' stated,

"(We are) conscious of our long-term responsibilities to shareholders and customers, we continued with capital expenditure to improve efficiency."

A rubber compound mixing plant was commissioned during 1983. This provided Sarmcol with

"the most modern, automated mixing plant available".

(Annual Report, 1983:3).

In 1984 a spiral hose braiding facility was introduced, as was a 15 000l flexible rubber bags to be carried in railway containers or flat-bed trucks (Annual Report, 1984). This rationalisation process had a drastic effect on employment.

"(They) say no work. In new mixing a new machine was introduced and a lot of people were retrenched. In moulding 5 people were retrenched and those people who were left there were given more jobs of those who were retrenched. You were doing 4 or 5 peoples' job but you were alone."

(Interview, Moses Madalala).

Given the general state of recession in the economy, as well as the lack of employment opportunities in the Howick region, an increasing level of unemployment in

Mpopphomeni has resulted (Interviews). Sarmcol can effect the demise of the community with the same bravado it employed in its creation.

The retrenchment of workers, so radical in numbers in such a short period of time, achieved two things: firstly, it halved the labour force and, secondly, it angered, alienated and frustrated workers as regards the working environment. Their frustrations were compounded by the arbitrary nature of these lay-offs. They felt that managements 'selection' of people to be retrenched was based on middle management's personal likes and dislikes. In the process of halving Sarmcol's workforce nobody knew who would be next.

One worker described the process;

"(It was) the time before the union come in, just come with a list, the manager, and just point 10 or 20 people. All out. Everybody was afraid of that, doesn't know what will happen to him. Some of the workers, scabs now, we were fighting for them because they not supposed to be retrenched - they got 30, 35 years service."

(Interview, Moses Madalala).

As an international company BTR plc does not have a very good name in labour relations. Its normal style of operating is to buy up companies, sell off the unprofitable parts and then impose a regime where short-term profitability is the main criterion. In September 1986 all but two workers were fired at their

artificial limb factory in Roehampton U.K. The workers had gone out on strike over the dismissal of their shop stewards. Ten percent of Dunlop's workforce in the U.K. has been retrenched since BTR bought the company and BTR unilaterally ended a national agreement with Dunlop unions over redundancies. In Trinidad workers from the Caribbean Tyre Company have been locked out of their jobs since September 1985.

"When we found out what BTR is doing in South Africa, we realised it is the same as it is doing in Trinidad. It is anti-worker and anti-union, and the company definitely has an international labour strategy."

(International Labour Reports 1987:18)

Workers with long service records were put on early retirement. But even this turned sour with Sarmcol claiming that they were not due for their pension; rather, they were supposed to be grateful for the monthly payments the company was prepared to make (in some cases as low as R4.60 but never higher than R35). Finally, it was the issue of retrenchment which enabled the union to sign up the majority of Sarmcol workers and it was also the issue of retrenchment which was one of the major contributing triggers of the strike. This will be examined below.

#### **4.4 GRIEVANCES**

In order to understand the full extent of bitterness

harboured by Sarmcol workers so that they come to dare a major confrontation, it is important to note the harshness of managerial authority on the shop floor. Workers' grievances exceeded the statements of heavy manual work, but focussed on the arbitrary powers of management and the lack of correct grievance and discipline procedures.

"...(if you have a complaint) you don't worry because they say you are talking too much, out."

(Interview, Simeon Mhlongo).

"...so the foreman whose running that department he's got the full power to do what he wants providing he tells the labour department, 'that certain member we giving him notice', or, 'we transferring him because of these reasons'. As long as the foreman says that, there is no other person who can say anything."

(Interview, Madijizela).

"... like punishment. Say you are late from tea, they say now you are going to a hard place that place is just known when you have to punish people you just put them there. That place is a low grade and so on. So those things were abolished (when the union came). It was confinement. Just like confinement where you punish people. So we remember an incident of how punishment was

done. There were just boots - gumboots put aside. When you have done something wrong. You don't know who last wore those. You are told, take these boots put them on, you are given a wheel-barrow and load the rubber on it and now you deliver the rubber from where it has been manufactured to dispatch or where it has been kept, with a wheelbarrow."

(Interview, Godfrey Lubazana).

Workers' grievances abound in all the interviews conducted: arbitrary discipline and punishment, lack of health and safety measures, lay-offs, poor canteen facilities, low wages, no time to shower after work, callous treatment and racism.

"It has never been a good relationship between workers and management. Make a mistake and you threatened with dismissal. If you don't work overtime - dismissal. We start overtime 4.45 - 10 pm and we get 20c per hour. There was no leave only get in December. You were sent with food on your hands so never satisfied. They put salt and everything in your hand. Cats were there on the table when we were eating as well. We had really come across grief there. Never get satisfactory food. If you are sick then you are taken to first aid and told at the weekend to go and see a private doctor. Pay you own money to the private doctor. They never wanted anyone to take sick leave. After sick leave they would tell you to go to

the personnel department offices. You were then between being transferred and dismissed. The foreman tells you to go there. The attitude of management has never been one we can boast about. And of course the money problem. When I went in there R12 was the wage<sup>22</sup>. Even there you get that because you go into overtime. And I eventually become a fitter and the money was R13. Then I went to the department that made tubes after 2 years. R30 I'd say I earned quite a lot. Then it increased gradually. 1975 I was changed to a chargehand. I earned about R60. And it went up to R116. I've never earned more than that. Even that money we are earning we are trying on our own to buy these houses. The fact that the company never tried anything in the form of buying houses or in any other way outside the factory."

(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

Working for Sarmcol has left the workers with two primary experiences: harsh working conditions with

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22. This worker started working at Sarmcol in 1962.

little reward, and retrenchments. Working life at Sarmcol had always been difficult. There were no discipline or grievance procedures and the work was heavy and manual. Their experience had shown that the only way to win any improvement in working conditions was to become an organised and united workforce (see chapter 5 below).

To the harsh working conditions they were to add the experience of retrenchments. Since being blighted by BTR, Sarmcol has, in line with BTR policy, transformed itself. Despite the poor economic conditions of the late 1970's it continued with its programme of economic expansion. At first workers welcomed the new machines. Work was easier. However, BTR was not interested in making work easier. The expansion programme involved not only capital development but automation.

It is argued that it is impossible to understand the ease with which MAWU was able to recruit members after the 1983 'out of court settlement', the determination of the workers to accept only a recognition agreement that would protect them and, finally, the solidarity of the strike, without understanding the experiences of working life at Sarmcol.

In a way this chapter illustrates the arguments of chapter 1 concerning the dialectical relationship between structure, experience and human agency. The structural forces over which the Sarmcol workers had no control were the rationalisation and retrenchment processes. Based on their experiences they intervened

actively in this process by demanding a recognition agreement that would give them protection and, when this was not forthcoming, went on strike.

**CHAPTER 5 "GWALA'S UNION" - THE EXPERIENCES OF  
ORGANISATION DURING THE 1950'S**

**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous two chapters have examined two aspects of the Sarmcol workers experiences. Chapter three outlined the process of proletarianisation and alienation from the land while chapter four explored working life at B.T.R. Sarmcol. These two aspects are a reflection of the structural forces which buffeted the Sarmcol workers. They were common lived experiences over which the Sarmcol workers did not have much control. They could and did respond to these structural forces in an individual way (eg see chapter 3.5.3.1 and 3.5.3.2). However, it was when they came to work at Sarmcol that the potential for intervening in history and shaping these structural forces collectively arose<sup>23</sup>.

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23. This is not meant to contradict my previous argument (see chapter 3.1 and 3.2). However, that was more of a response to the structural forces i.e. passive intervention, while the experiences described below are an active intervention. An alternative of the future was visualised whereas the response as labour tenants was more a desperate

12.5 percent of Sarmcol workers began working at Sarmcol prior to 1950. Between 1951 and 1960 another 19.1 percent of strikers began working at Sarmcol. Thus a total of 31.6 percent of today's strikers experienced the power of organisation during the 1950's. However, this chapter will argue that those experiences stretched far beyond the third of the workforce who actually lived through them. In doing so they became part of the popular memory of all Sarmcol workers and as such play a decisive role in shaping the present consciousness of the Sarmcol workers.

## 5.2 THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

As argued above only 31,6 percent of today's strikers lived through the experiences outlined above. Yet a central tenents of this thesis is the continuity between past and present, as well as the importance of the past in shaping the consciousness of the present.

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attempt to maintain the status quo.

There are a number of factors which need to be discussed if one is to understand the processing and interpretation of experiences in this community. However, there is also the question of generational experience. How experiences of one generation are passed on to another and thus become part of the process of developing consciousness in communities. In chapter one it was argued that a vital part of this process is the role of the grassroots intellectuals. The grassroots intellectuals at Sarmcol, it is argued, fall into two categories - the traditional imbongi and the shop stewards.

The crucial importance of the imbongi to this process is the result of two factors. Firstly, the traditional role of the imbongi within zulu culture (see Cope, 1968) provides this individual with a central role that is unquestioned by the rest of the community. Traditionally praise-poems were praises of important people (usually chiefs and thus men) within the community.

"The function of praise-poems ... which is to bring about conformity to the approved modes of behaviour. ... The praiser expresses the opinion of the people and so pressed conformity to the approved pattern upon the chief. The purpose of the praise-poem is to present the chief as an object of admiration, and there is consequently a tendency to maximise praise and minimise criticism. ... absence of praise is less harsh than the presence of criticism."

However the imbongi's role is also to reflect cultural values, and as these cultural values change so the content of the poems reflect these changes. The poems also serve a political function, record important events and unify communities (Cope, 1968).

Secondly, there is a very low level of literacy amongst the workers. 67 percent of workers have an educational level of standard 4 or less with 23 percent having no formal education at all. As a result the oral tradition of transmitting knowledge assumes the utmost importance. The role of the imbongi is central, in the recording of events, to an understanding, for the community, of how these events affected them, and, in being a central store of advice.

The Sarmcol shop stewards are the visible leadership of the Sarmcol community. If one examines them as a collective we find that there is a difference between them and the majority of the Sarmcol workers. Sixty percent of the Sarmcol workers are older than forty years of age, however, most of the shop stewards are in their early thirties. The common childhood and early working experience of the Sarmcol workers is that of labour tenancy, yet, many of the shop stewards never directly experienced labour tenancy. Either they were born in the 'shack areas' of Lions River or they left the farms as young children. Most of the Sarmcol workers have two experiences of unionisation - SACTU and MAWU (see chapter 6 below), yet for many of the shop stewards MAWU is their only experience. The

majority of Sarmcol workers began working at Sarmcol in the 1950's or early 1960's. Most of the shop stewards began in the late 1960's, early 1970's.

Two generations of workers are represented here. The older generation makes up the mass of the workers, while the younger generation is the leadership. This should not be interpreted as a rejection of the older leadership. When Sarmcol retrenched large numbers of workers in the early 1980's (see chapter 4) most of them were older workers (who had memories of SACTU organisation). And by co-incidence they were also MAWU members. Yet the consciousness and ideology of the Sarmcol workers reflects that of the the majority. The reality is that the shop stewards and/or younger workers do not see their histories as different. There is one common history that has developed. In the development of this one history, we find, that the imbongi has a vital role to play.

#### 5.2.1 THE IMBONGI OF THE SARMCOL WORKERS

Lawrence Zondi is the imbongi of the Sarmcol workers. His life straddles two generations of struggle. Active during the 1950's he is now a MAWU shop steward. As an imbongi he is the carrier of the history of the Sarmcol workers, his responsibility is not only to record their struggles and experiences but also to interpret the significance of these experiences. In his orations he calls on the past to explain the present and give advice for the future.

Zondi comes from the line of Bambatha, the leader of the 1906 poll tax rebellion, transformed through popular culture to represent one of the pinnacles of resistance in Natal (see Marks, 1970). Zondi himself picks up his story.

"My father was one of the sons of Chief Mzimba. He was taken, when my grandfather was shot, as a small boy, to Underberg. My father grew up and married at Underberg. He was working on a farm, for a long time. When my mother was passed away I have to come down here to Gezibuso. It was my uncle that was there. He was bringing us to stay here - Gezibuso. When my father got sick he came back here to Gezibuso. I was a small boy when I moved to Gezibuso, twelve years. I couldn't manage to go to school because the father that was here, he got many childs and couldn't take us to school. I went to night school. I got standard two. There was an african teacher but that house was a church house. When I was moving to Maritzburg I couldn't find a school. There was no night school. I started work working in a kitchen. I worked there a couple of years. After I left there I go work in Maritzburg. In Maritzburg I was working in the garden for a couple of years. I left there and was working in a road. Road department. While I was there I got married. I worked there a few months and that job was finished. I get

a job in Hilton Road there was a man he got a horse. I wasn't doing a lot of job. I was cleaning the horse and clearing the place where the horse was staying and taking it for walk-rides now. That was my job. Then I left there and started at Sarmcol. It was 1951 when I started at Sarmcol. By the time I was starting at Sarmcol I was married. My wife was staying at Gezibuso. I was sleeping at Howick West, there was a place to rent, an Indian place there I was staying and go home on weekends. Then the people was moved and I went to stay at the compound at Sarmcol. When I started at Sarmcol I was employed to work in mixing. But not for too long. Where I have been working long is in mechanical I, right till now."

These experiences form the material for Zondi's poetry. His style of oration is spontaneous, an event or a word unleashes him. Grabbing a stick, he strides up and down, words pouring out. He calls up images of zulu culture, past experiences and struggles of the Sarmcol workers, but also of other struggles against oppression, his style a mixture of the traditional imbongi and the lay preacher. In this mode he is usually providing inspiration to the workers to move forward and overcome the obstacles of the present. But at other times his role is more educational, explaining and telling the stories of past struggle - of previous times of resistance and unionisation (see below). But even in this role he draws links between the past and present.

During his years at Howick he has absorbed the local history, which he combines with wider experiences of oppression and exploitation (Green, 1986). But Zondi was not alone, his experiences were shared by other men who came to work at Sarmcol. He has taken these experiences and through his poetry welded them together to unite old and young around one common history.

#### 5.2.2 THE HISTORIES OF OLD MEN

Eventhough people experience their lives solitarily, as a result of structural determinants, these experiences have common themes. I would like to introduce you to three men. These men are from Zondi's peer group. They are also a community reference group. One of them is also a carrier of the history of the Sarmcol workers. However, his role is different from Zondi's. He is not so much the interpreter of the past for the future, but the recorder of the past, the oral history book and its reference library. The other two are representative of the ordinary Sarmcol worker. They have no high political profile in the community. They are the workers who sit at the back of the hall, miss meetings and slip out for a smoke break. Yet their life experiences are no different from that of the imbongi or the worker leader. In an informal way they ensure the survival of the traditions. They ratify the experiences which are talked about on the public platform. They interact and pass on, to the new workers, these experiences; both the private and the

public.

Ntombela is an old man. At the time of the massive retrenchments in 1982, he was retired from Sarmcol. He is not a central part of the present day struggle. However, his importance lies in his age and experience. Interviewing Sarmcol workers, questioning them about the past - the 1950's, the ICU, often elicited the response,

"have you spoken to Ntombela, the old man from Impendle, he can tell you about that?"

Ntombela was born in 1918 in the location of Impendle.

"My fathers moved from Lionskop to Impendle and that's where I was born. They moved from the farms this side - farms owned by black people and moved to Impendle. People did own farms there, because they bought those places, early days, I don't know how. But people bought those places. They still owning them up till now. When my fathers moved to Impendle they were working on the roads department. They were making a road from Elandskop to Impendle, past Impendle and to Bulwer and all those places. And they were getting 25c a month.

I first started at school and I left at Class I, I couldn't further my education because my father was late. So I went to the farms to get a job in order to help my mother bring us up with other children. It was Mr Brook's

farm, just by Impendle, I used to sleep there. There were no families staying on the farm. People were just coming from Impendle to work there. We didn't use that 6 month system. People worked all the time long. Then when you are tired of working on the farm then you just leave the job and go seek a job elsewhere. We used to plough with the cattle and I used to hold the rope. I was paid R1.50 per month. I worked on the farm for three years. I didn't like working on the farm. The conditions were very poor and bad but just because we were suffering we had to work.

At the age of twenty, I was employed by Sarmcol. We were very few at that time. When I first started I was working in footwear, trimming soles and heels. I left halfway and went to Joburg. Then I came back to work at Sarmcol. When I came to work I was renting at George. It was very tough. After they broke down those houses, we were moved here to Mpophomeni. My wife came to stay awhile but then she went back to Impendle. Now I am pensioned I have moved back to Impendle."

Godfrey Labazana is one of the faces in the crowd at union meetings. When Baba Zondi or other workers stand up, and draw on the past to explain the present, he has an empathy with their experience because their past is

his past as well. He comes from a reserve in the area of Bergville.

"I was just looking after my fathers' cattle. There was in fact a big Lubazana family, not one family but Lubazana by surname and their cattle and goats. There were actually no possessors of those goats and cattle. So from there I had an opportunity to go and attend school. It wasn't that hard a life because at that time we were not aware of all these delicious foods. We used to live on maas and putu and there were somehow plenty goats some stage, without any celebration we had to slaughter a goat and we had meat. Our people were Sarmcol workers - both neighbours and also people among our family. So I completed my Form I and my father was somehow unable to let me continue with my education so I had to do some other things. And I then straight came to be an employee of Sarmcol. 9 March 1953 I was employed as a Sarmcol worker. We started with 2 pounds 65 shillings a week. I was renting at George. When they moved us, I came to stay at the Compound, the one at Mpophomeni. My wife was staying at Bergville."

The life of Simon Ntombela is the most statistically representative of the Sarmcol workers (see chapter 3).

"I was born on a farm in Dargle. My mother and father were also from there. It was a big farm, many other families were living

there. The limit of cattle for us was five. This was set by the farmer. I, my brother and my sister, we were three who were responsible for that farm. We tend to the fields, see to the roads which are done right and then also during the harvest we go and work. Initially the order was that we had to work six months outside. Some would go to other farms and some would go here and work at Sarmcol. My father was at Sarmcol. But finally it got to that position where he (the farmer) was saying no to that system. We had to leave because his rules were getting more tough. We went to another farm. This one did not allow cattle. It was much worse. I was the one responsible for working on that farm. It was so hard that I ran away. I got arrested, my father came to fetch me, and I had to work on that farm for nine years. Then I got my leave and we left and went to live at Zenzele. I was in Zenzele for two years or so before I found work at Sarmcol. That was 1960. We were earning R6. Then the City Council said we must leave Zenzele and we came here to Mpophomeni."

In the factory where the Sarmcol workers were to meet they had already had experiences of a similar nature. Most were from rural backgrounds, with access to land and cattle. Their families and/or neighbours had a tradition of working at Sarmcol. The experiences they had absorbed before coming to work at Sarmcol are

similar; the reserves, labour tenancy, migrancy, and exploitation (see chapter 3). Now in the turbulent decade of the 1950's their lives were to intersect.

The 1950's were characterised by widespread political action. On the one hand the African National Congress (ANC) mobilised on the political front while the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and its affiliates were organising amongst the working class. These efforts resulted in mass mobilisation on all fronts. The state responded to the various campaigns of the 1950's with severe repression, resulting in the banning of the ANC in the early 1960's. Many activists and trade union leaders were arrested and detained causing organisation to collapse, SACTU was forced into exile and workers were left unorganised and leaderless for more than a decade (see Luckhardt & Wall, 1980; Lodge, 1983)<sup>24</sup>.

Howick did not escape the turmoil which engulfed the rest of South Africa. It was a small, close-knit community with most of its residents employed at

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24. This is not to suggest that the oppressed "masses" were totally quiescent and passive during this period. Rather there was no overt, visible worker's organisation during this latter period of the 1960's.

Sarmcol (Natal Archives, 1/HWK 3/2/3/2/1, Magistrates Report). They were also caught in the general political upheaval. Its residents joined political organisation and participated in political campaigns. For most people, however, their experience of organisation during the 1950's was linked to their working lives at Sarmcol. It was through SACTU organisation that the Congress tradition left its mark in Howick. Yet, union organisation and veteran trade unionist Harry Gwala were active at Sarmcol before the mass campaigns of the 1950's.

Ntombela (an old Sarmcol worker who was retrenched in the early 1980's) claimed to have met Gwala when he first came to work at Sarmcol. He described his early memories of Gwala and the union,

"There was a union but it wasn't inside because Harry Gwala was still organising at that time. He was still trying to find members. He was not doing his job properly because he was afraid of the police at that time. We just heard that it was a union but we didn't know the name of that union. When I left in 1935 Gwala was already organising. And when I went to Joburg I also met this union."

After working in Johannesburg Ntombela returned to Sarmcol and once more encountered Gwala and the union.

### 5.3 GWALA'S UNION

Harry Gwala is an elusive figure in the Natal midlands. He is remembered by most, however, few will talk either about him or about his activities. He has left his mark securely on organisational history in the Natal Midlands/Pietermaritzburg area, yet, his activities are documented in no history book. And his contemporaries are either imprisoned or dead while he is serving a life sentence<sup>25</sup>.

At this point dates are hazy and meaningless for the Sarmcol workers. Ntombela claims that Gwala was already organizing Sarmcol workers in the 1930's. However, Gwala himself asserted that he first became interested in politics in 1944. Prior to this he was a school teacher. He was born in the Pietermaritzburg area. With his interest in politics he developed a special interest in trade unions. He joined the African National Congress (A.N.C.) in 1944 and also became a member of the Communist Party of South Africa (C.P.S.A.). He later influenced his contemporaries to join the C.P.S.A.. From about the middle of 1944 he

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25. Harry Gwala was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1977 for recruiting and arranging for people to leave the country for military training (Court Records, 1977).

was an organiser of the Natal Tanning Extract and Chemical Workers' Union, the Building and Allied Workers Union and the Brick and Tile Workers Union in Pietermaritzburg. He left Pietermaritzburg in 1948 and moved to Durban to organise the Textile Workers Union. He stayed there for just over a year and then returned to Pietermaritzburg where he started organising the Howick Rubber Workers Union and the Municipal Workers Union. He organised these unions for about four years before he was banned in 1952, by the Minister of Justice under the Suppression of Communism Act (Lodge, 1986; Court Records, 1977). Thus by the time Harry Gwala organised workers at Howick he had had much experience of trade union work. During this time he also worked closely with Moses Mabhida (Lodge, 1986).

#### 5.3.1 HOWICK RUBBER WORKERS' UNION

The Howick Rubber Workers' Union was formed in September 1951 and applied for registration on 26 September 1951. A year later on 5 September 1952 the application was accepted (Government Gazette, no 4919). All male and female non-european workers who worked at Sarmcol, or who were engaged in rubber work in the magisterial district of Lions River or unemployed persons seeking employment in the industry were eligible for membership. On the 1 April 1952 the union applied for membership to the South African Trades and Labour Council. At this point there were 150 paid-up members of a total membership of 700. The chair`man' of the union was David Sewdan and the secretary Harry

Gwala (South African Trades and Labour Council File, DC 8.97, membership application HRWU to SAT&LC, Constitution HRWU). Their affiliation was accepted the following year (8 May 1952).

The Constitution of the Howick Rubber Workers Union (see Appendix 3) stated that the

"The Union shall operate in the rubber industry within the Magisterial district of Howick, which industry shall mean all work connected with the manufacture of rubber goods."

(Constitution of Howick Rubber Workers' Union, clause 3)

The union stated its aims as follows:

- to organise all employees eligible for membership,
- to ensure employees received all their legal benefits,
- to fight for improved conditions of employment,
- to negotiate agreements with Sarmcol,
- to assist members in obtaining and retaining employment,
- to keep in touch with appropriate legislation,
- to promote unity between workers,
- to co-operate with other workers' organisations,
- to co-operate as far as possible with employers,
- to represent members at the Industrial Council or Conciliation Board, and
- to do other lawful things that may be in the interests of the union.

On the 11 October 1951 Gwala, as the appointed representative of the Howick Rubber Workers' Union forwarded demands to Sarmcol management concerning wages and other conditions of employment. A month later there was still no reply from Sarmcol management. When by the 3 December 1951 the workers still had not received a reply, they declared a dispute. They then wrote to the Minister of Labour notifying him of the dispute, informing him of its history and requesting that he appoint a Conciliation Board to settle the dispute. At this point in time the Howick Rubber Workers Union represented 153 indians, 32 coloureds and 2 africans. The Minister turned down the application for a Conciliation Board as the union did not represent enough workers.

The following year on 9 May 1952 Harry Gwala once more, on behalf of the Sarmcol workers, wrote to Sarmcol management, enclosing a list of demands and requesting a reply. By now the union represented 730 workers. The demands covered the following areas:

- that the agreement should cover all workers at Sarmcol,
- wage increase,
- a forty hour week,
- four consecutive weeks annual leave,
- three weeks sick leave per year,
- all public holidays including May 1 to be paid holidays,
- piecework, taskwork or bonus system to be prohibited,
- overalls and protective clothing to be provided, and

- recognition of the Howick Rubber Workers' Union,  
Shortly after this proposal was submitted Harry Gwala  
was banned for two years (see above.).

Sarmcol management did not reply directly to this  
proposal, instead they called together a number of the  
workers and told them that they were not prepared to  
negotiate and that those workers who were not happy  
could leave. Management tried to recruit workers into  
a company union. Subsequently a meeting was called of  
all the workers S.B. Maharaj was elected to replace  
Harry Gwala and the workers once more decided to apply  
for a Conciliation Board.

The events that followed are summed up in this quote:

"... application was made to the Honourable  
the Minister of Labour through the  
Pietermaritzburg office by petitions signed  
by the employees for the appointment of a  
Conciliation Board in terms of Section 35(1)  
(b) Act 36 of 1937 in respect of indian and  
coloured employees and for an Arbitration  
Board, War Measure No. 145 of 1942, in  
respect of African workers. ... In July 1952,  
the union was advised that the applicants  
must be full paid-up members of the union  
before the application would be submitted to  
the Honourable the Minister of Labour. ...  
The Divisional Inspector was advised that the  
application was made in terms of Section 35  
(1) (b) of the Act, Subsequently the  
Department suggested that fresh petitions

should be signed as they were not sure that the petitions had been signed at the time of the second application. That objection was later withdrawn as a result of a letter sent by this Council. ... The union now advises that the petition forms have been sent to the Company and that each signatory was called into the office individually and asked by the Management if they had signed the petition. ... The fear of victimisation has led many of the employees to deny that they had signed the petitions in question. ... My council protests ..."

(Letter from H.S. Boyder, joint general secretary S.A.T.&L.C. to Secretary for Labour, 29 August 1952.)

On the 4 November 1952 S.B. Maharaj notified the Minister of Labour that the workers still had not heard the result of their application. On the 5 November Mr Sage, manager of Sarmcol advised the Department of Labour that he was prepared to meet Boyder along with representatives of the union to discuss the issue. Boyder agreed to these negotiations, however, upon reaching Howick he was unable to contact the union secretary. He then met with the executive who appointed representatives. At the negotiations on the 14 November it was agreed to withdraw the original demands and amendments were placed on the table for discussion by the workers. After 3 hours of discussion the meeting broke up with an agreement to meet at a later date. Boyder reported

back to the membership. On the 26 November Sarmcol submitted its proposals for consideration. The negotiations continued on December 1st. This proposal in reality, only covered wages - and a small increase at that - with a minor concession in terms of long service. The union could not get Sarmcol to move on its offer during the negotiations. On 2 December a report-back was held with 1 200 workers who unanimously accepted Sarmcol's offer. As a result of this decision the Department of Labour was informed that the union had withdrawn its application for the Conciliation Board. (see appendix 3). When Boyder left the report-back meeting he was under the impression that the workers had understood the implications of the agreement and thus had agreed to withdraw their application for a Conciliation Board. However, it subsequently emerged that workers had not understood the full implications and that once they did they were not happy with the outcome and did not wish to withdraw their application for a Conciliation Board.

Unfortunately the exact outcome of the above dispute is not known as correspondence between the Howick Rubber Workers Union and the S.A.T. & L.C. broke off in early 1953. One reason for this could have been the failure of the Howick Rubber Workers Union to pay its affiliation fees (Trades and Labour Council Correspondence). However, the Trades and Labour Council was not to last much longer. In October 1954 it disbanded over the implementation of Industrial Conciliation Bill (Lodge, 1983).

### 5.3.2 RUBBER AND CABLE WORKERS UNION

In 1955 a delegate, M. Pillay, of the Howick Rubber Workers Union, representing 750 workers, attended the Inaugural Conference of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) (Luckhardt & Wall, 1983). He was subsequently elected onto the Executive Committee of SACTU. He attended the 1st National Conference of SACTU in 1956<sup>26</sup> (Treason Trial Exhibits Box AD 1812 EW 7.2.1).

Gwala's original banning order was extended for another two years after it initially expired, and finally the order expired in 1956. He was employed at Edendale Provincial Hospital from the beginning of 1954 until 1958. Once his banning order expired in 1956 he began once more organising the Sarmcol workers at Howick. He was also involved in organising the Bakery Union. The 1958 pound a day campaign in Pietermaritzburg was a well organised. However, Gwala was dismissed from Edendale Hospital for distributing SACTU pamphlets connected with the campaign. As a result of the success of this campaign a number of unions affiliated

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26. The part of the puzzle for which I can find no answer is that the list of unions affiliated to SACTU does not include the Howick Rubber Workers' Union.

to SACTU were established in Pietermaritzburg - the Laundry Workers' Union, the Distributive Workers' Union, the Municipal Workers' Union, the Railway Workers' Union and, finally, the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union<sup>27</sup>. The following year a SACTU Local Committee was set up in Pietermaritzburg and Gwala was elected secretary. He was also elected onto the ANC Committee for Natal in 1959.

By 1962 the union membership of the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union had increased to 1500. To the workers the name was unimportant. It was 'Gwala's Union'. Gwala was without doubt a charismatic leader as well as an experienced organiser. And it is this charisma rather than organisational methods that has remained in popular memory.

"Just call the people outside the Sarmcol grounds. Just tell them he is having a meeting, what he should want, what they should fight. And we was follow."  
(Interview, Baba Zondi).

As with the Howick Rubber Workers' Union, Sarmcol management refused to recognise the new union. Gwala

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27. This union came to replace the Howick Rubber Workers' Union organising workers at Sarmcol. It has not been possible to ascertain the exact reason for the change of name.

was never allowed access to Sarmcol premises. The members had to devise other means of meeting,

"Harry Gwala used to come to us during our lunch breaks, call us together outside of the factory gates and explain to us what a union was, how we can be members."

(Interview, Absolum Ndlovu).

The most well known meeting place was under the tree, across the road, by the bridge.

"Gwala used to call the people under a tree, the people would sit down there and discuss their problems, ... we would sing songs about worker struggle, ... he told us that we had to fight for a higher wage and conditions at work ..."<sup>28</sup>

(Interviews).

At the meetings, Gwala's most important organisational message to the workers was that of unity. This is the message that the workers remember, the message that has traversed generations of Sarmcol workers,

"He tell everybody that you must be one.

Because if you are one then everything will

28. Some of the worker's accounts are a composite from a number of interviews (Duthu Philip Zondi, Detho Sibisi, Mkakeni Nxumalo, Baba Zondi, Ndombese Mkize, Absolum Ndlovu, Simeon Mhlongo, Ntombela, and Madijizela). Where this is the case they are referenced as 'Interviews'.

come all right. He say if you talk something, if you see something bad, you must go all together and tell the boss that you want that and that."

(Interveiw, Simeon Mhlongo).

All activities associated with the union faced constant police harassment. Worker's implicated Sarmcol management in the speedy arrival of the police whenever Gwala's presence was noted.

"The police used to approach them while they were just sitting under the tree, ... police used to come and ask Gwala what we were doing. He did not appear scared of them, especially afrikaner police. He would tell them what they want - a living wage and healthy and safe working conditions."

(Interview, Mkakeni Nxumalo).

As Sarmcol management refused to meet with or recognise the union alternative methods of pushing their demands forward had to be found.

"Management was not prepared to meet with Gwala but he has to force the matter to go through till he meets them. ... So we used to be behind him at our lunch time and say we must do this and give us instructions then we will listen to that instruction over lunch time and proceed to meet the management. ... So that when we were holding our meeting we had a letter drafted and then we proceeded with that letter to management. He remembers some stage where people couldn't go for lunch, they were all around the lawn by the

offices and the management at that time was Sage<sup>29</sup>, he came out and asked what was happened. And the guy with the letter, Macqudo took the letter and gave it. ... It was the workers who were given instructions or told how to do it."  
(Interview, Godfrey Labazana).

At other times workers used other strategies, "There was also a time when workers wore stickers which had 'rubber burns' written on them. It was a way in which workers show management that they are misusing their power and the rubber in fact does burn. So people were mobilizing on that issue so that they could get their benefits."  
(Interview, Godfrey Labazana; Luckhardt & Wall, 1980)

Seminars were organised and through their union they had contact with other organised workers. Workers who

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29. Bonner and Lambert (1987) report the use of a similar tactic at Amato Textiles. There, workers gathered on the forbidden lawn in front of the factory offices. This tactic resulted in the recognition of the Textile Workers' Industrial Union. Unfortunately at B.T.R. the tactic did not have the same degree of success.

were "experienced in the union" used to attend the meetings. Ntombela described his experience,

"We used to attend those meetings in Durban. Hire cars in Howick. But we used to hold those meetings at night for fear of the police. We were just taught how to organise unions, what is the help of the unions, how will the union help us. We used to have such meetings. We were also told that whites in overseas fought for their rights through the union and we fight for our rights too we will also come right. How we used to hold meetings and sometimes were frightened and don't hold meetings at all in fear of police. We were not free at all organising those meetings."

(Interview, Ntombela).

Sarmcol workers were also visited by other ANC and SACTU officials,

"Moses Mabhida came. He used to explain to us that it is helpful joining the union, because the union will help us, no other people will help us in our problems in the company except ourselves. If we are not organised there's nobody to help us. The company cannot do us favours either, they will oppress us."

(Interview, Ntombela).

"I remember Oliver Tambo but he only came once and I did not see him after that. There were quite a lot of people at the meeting but

it was just a usual meeting. He's not important with us, he went away and left us alone."

(Interview, Ntombela)

Gwala and the presence of the union meant more for the Sarmcol workers than a few meetings 'under the tree'.

"We actually improved some of the things as far as wages were concerned being an organised people."

(Interview, Godfrey Labazana).

It is to these campaigns and the events of the 1950's that we now turn.

#### 5.4 CAMPAIGNS OF THE 1950'S

The campaigns of the 1950's are all associated with "Gwala's union", but the specific details of the event and the union or date with which they were concretely linked are lost from popular memory. It will be argued below that this is a direct result of the oral tradition of the Sarmcol workers. Not only is history recorded through oral testimony but the recorders of this history (see below) interpret and explain the meaning of this history for the rest of the workers. And in many cases it is this interpretation rather than the actual event itself that is remembered by the "mass" of the workers.

However it does seem, from studying the available records of the Howick Rubber Workers' Union, that the campaigns referred to below were part of the organisation of the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union. The only possible exception is the overall campaign (see 5.4.1 below). The lack of protective clothing is mentioned as a grievance in the dispute between the Howick Rubber Workers' Union and Sarmcol (see above 5.3.1).

#### 5.4.1 OVERALLS

Sarmcol management (Rosenthal, 1981) claim that when a directive was issued from the Labour Department to supply workers with overalls, this was followed. However the workers have a different version of events. Workers claim that overalls were only issued to workers in the mixing department, it was acknowledged that those people were working in a dirty area. The rest of the workforce were required to work in their own clothes. The account of how the rest of the workforce won the demand for overalls is somewhat muddled. Simon Ngubane, who was a shop steward under MAWU, reencountered the story as told to him by his father,

"Father saying Gwala is a very strong man.

Gwala out of the gate, jump on car, call the people, 'come here, come here, join the union, the union is the power of the workers. Gwala is saying power power. Call the police. After that ... management is afraid, give out overalls."

(Interview, Simon Ngubane).

Workers at the time expanded the story,

"We used to work with our own clothes. The union demanded that the company give us overalls. They refused and we went into the factory but we refused to work. We waited until they gave us overalls. ... New personnel manager arrived after the strike and promised that all the workers would be issued with overalls. So we were given short-sleeve overalls. Given these overalls after the strike, therefore the short-sleeve overalls issued was the compromise after the strike."

(Interviews).

However, some workers employed during the 1950's denied that a strike had ever taken place over the issue of overalls. Whatever the exact version is, we do know that the lack of overalls being issued to the workforce was a grievance. Using their organised force, in whatever way, they won the demand for overalls. This struggle has survived in popular memory, illustrating to workers the advantages of organisation.

#### 5.4.2 POUND A DAY CAMPAIGN

The campaign for a pound a day vibrated throughout the Howick area. Present day Sarmcol workers, who were working on white farms during the 1950's, reported that

they had heard rumours of what was happening at Sarmcol,

"I hear the rumours that the organisers of that union was Harry Gwala. But I hear - only hear, never see Gwala help the people at Sarmcol by giving them a pound a day."  
(Interview, Dingizwe Ndlele).

"At first Gwala approached the management for negotiations over on pound a day and the company refused at first. So we waited for a year. Gwala was still trying to negotiate with the management. They refused. After a year Gwala said we must go onto a strike. ... we must be paid R2 per day. We strike for R2 per day. ... We stayed at home until we get response. We did stay three days. Monday, Tuesday we only started work on Thursday then. I don't recall anyone being arrested or fired from work. But what I actually know is that there was a lot of intimidation of people happening, that they shouldn't talk about this, they were 'told' to stay neutral. ... They agreed to the demands of the workers because they gave us overalls and agreed to one pound a day. After we had received a pound a day, again we came back again, Harry said we must demand another one pound a day on top of this one now. There was a lot of argument amongst management itself but people didn't strike. But after some weeks or so we got the second one pound.

And after that they started deducting again, deductions and we didn't know what these deductions were for. And we just kept on working, we couldn't do anything."  
(Interviews).

This campaign was used as a vital organising strategy by both Gwala and SACTU in the entire Pietermaritzburg region (see above). As a result of its success a number of unions - including the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union - were launched. Its success also initiated the launching of the Pietermaritzburg SACTU Local Committee<sup>30</sup>

#### 5.4.3 POTATO BOYCOTT

The potato boycott was a campaign which straddled the divide between the reproductive and productive spheres. The boycott was called by the ANC in response to the

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30. However the exact date of the campaign and its eventual victory is unclear as regards the Sarmcol workers. Oral evidence is as stated above unable to provide the date of the wage increase. Luckhardt & Wall (1983) report a major campaign around wages at Sarmcol, with a resultant rise in wages of between 75c and R1.50 per week in 1961.

horrific conditions found on the potato farms in the Bethal district. The campaign was taken up by SACTU and by all accounts was extremely successful (Luckhardt and Wall, 1980).

"I heard the rumours at one time, it was said that people who were arrested or sentenced used to plant the potatoes. They were beaten there to the extent that they would die and even be buried in the same place as the potatoes were planted. ... I heard that the workers in the Transvaal are digging potatoes by hand. ... That was the anger that arose among the people to boycott the potatoes. ... 'cause when you cutting the potatoes, when you see the water what was coming to the potatoes they say it was the blood of the people, ... So there were papers issued out. Some were put to the telephone or to the post and some were put on the bridge. Wherever one could see. ... You were finding the posters down on the floor. Sometimes you will find it on the wall like that. Without any signature of who bought it. ... People in the community were all behind the potato boycott. ... People from Impendle were the people who were against the boycott - they used to buy potatoes, they used to say want to buy potatoes go to Impendle. They were complaining that we are starving. We was tell them that we are also starving."  
(Interviews).

This campaign linked their exploitation to that of other workers. It enabled them to see their struggles in the light of a national perspective. Exploitation and suffering was something all workers suffered.

#### 5.4.4 ANTI-PASS CAMPAIGNS

One of the most prominent campaigns of the 1950's was the anti-pass campaigns. The Sarmcol workers, the majority of them having come from the families of labour tenants, had experienced the full brunt of the pass-laws. They knew the difficulty of getting urban employment, if you were from the countryside. They had also learnt ways of getting around the laws (see chapter 3). And because of this they also refused to carry passes.

"Pass-books were introduced, and they restricted people's movements therefore people could not move to other areas to find work. People were annoyed even though they were not that clear about passes/politics and things. ... an instruction, a command that people must carry their reference book wherever, from morning until they go back from work. Lunch time you must carry it in your overall. So that has created a problem - if it falls down you have to pay money again and if you are caught not having your reference book then again you are arrested. So people met, came all together. So they took a decision that we must get rid of it.

... There are quite a lot of people who burn their pass and since then they haven't taken another one. They don't even bother with their pension because you cannot get pension if you haven't got a reference book. They say they don't care, they will not carry a reference book because our power has been misused.

(Interviews).

#### 5.4.5 BUS BOYCOTT

Factory organisation under SACTU did not exclude community issues. There was no separate organisation or ANC Branch established in Zenzele, George or any of the other communities where large numbers of Sarmcol workers lived. Instead workers used the forums which they had established as part of their trade union organisation to address issues of concern to them in the community. For example they initiated a boycott of the bus service from George.

"So the issue was firstly we used to pay 6d from Riversdale to Sarmcol and then the owner put up the price by 3d and we said 'no we won't use your buses now, because you didn't even think of 1d just 3d one time'. So all the people boycotted the bus, the price went down to 7d. ... This happened when Gwala was still there. So it started from our meeting and we discussed the issue. 'The man has put

3d and made it 9d.' So we took the decision that no-one should ride the bus, we pass the message to our children, to our wives."

(Interview, Godfrey Labazana).

However, organisation of the community in this manner meant that large sections of that community were excluded from the decision-making process. This is particularly so with the women. Thus, while the union was challenging oppressive structures within the relations of production, these notions were not being carried over into other spheres of life and other oppressive relations eg patriarchy, were being reproduced. It is argued below that this was a pattern which was to continue (see chapter 6 & 7).

#### 5.4.6 1959 NATAL DISTURBANCES

Between June and August 1959 Natal was shaken by a series of events which became known by a variety of names: Natal Disturbances, Natal Riots or Womens' Protests. Resistance began in Cato Manor in June. Women angered by continued police raids on brewing and shebeens marched to the municipal beer-halls, chased out the customers and destroyed the beer. News of the demonstrations spread and other women followed suit. At first the disturbances were confined to the urban areas, but by late July, early August the rural areas were afire (Natal Witness, June - August 1959; Yawitch, 1978; Walker, 1982).

Howick did not remain aloof from these events. The Sarmcol workers even though they were not directly involved, as the campaigns were directed by women, were aware of the happenings and, in some cases, even took credit.

The first news report of the Pietermaritzburg area being affected appeared on the 15 August 1959 (Natal Witness). The previous day women had attacked the municipal beer hall in Retief Street. As a result all beer halls would be closed until the position was discussed. There had also been disturbances in Edendale, where thirty women had been arrested who were subsequently joined by women from New Hanover<sup>31</sup> and Durban. By this stage the New Hanover women had already destroyed dipping tanks in their area. Incidents of this nature continued to be reported until August 27, the day after Chief Luthuli issued his peace message, when women once more stoned the beerhall in Rietief Street (Natal Witness).

The Department of Bantu Administration started an inquiry into the causes of the 'Natal Riots'. They reported that the actions of some white officials helped set off the explosion. Dipping inspectors forced african women to fill tanks without payment and

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31. A number of Sarmcol workers who stay in the compound have homesteads and family in New Hanover.

in order to speed up their work inspectors forced cattle through quickly. The dip mixture was made so weak that it did not kill the ticks although it nearly killed the weakened cattle (Natal Witness).

#### 5.4.6.1 Beer Hall Boycott

The Sarmcol workers were never directly involved in the boycott of the beerhalls,

"Here in Howick it wasn't like Pietermaritzburg or Durban. There it was hot. ... So in fact they were against the white zulu beer. At George they didn't interfere with those people because they were brewing their own beer, they were not buying from town or the beerhall."

(Interviews).

This does not mean that they were not fully aware of the situation,

"Yes I do remember the call that people shouldn't handle ever those beer containers and there were a lot of fight, people hitting those people who used to go for beer and the police used to intervene. When the police are away we used to continue hitting those people. ... Women were hitting men to stop them from buying beer ... the men were wasting money that's why the women were fighting. ... It was mainly the women who were leader of that campaign because they were not arrested, somehow they could just

take out their doek and then hold by hand.  
 ... At the time of the b'lycott some of the men were wearing dresses like women, fighting with those men who were buying beer. ...  
 There was no women's section of Congress organising here at George, we men used to organise our wives because we were the believer of Congress. ... We were told if we were to offer we would simply be arrested, so we rather be behind all the scene and we used to see the police chasing the wives 'hey you wives go away' and being arrested."  
 (Interveiw).

#### 5.4.6.2 Cattle Dips

While the men were aware of the beerhall boycotts, it did not affect them directly. They heard the stories, and claimed it was the men who were organising them, but none of them were directly involved, ne'ither did any activity take place in George. With the destruction of the cattle dips it was a little different. Dips were destroyed in the rural areas. The majority of Sarmcol workers had come from rural areas. During the 1950's many of them still had wives and family living in these areas. The Natal Witness notes that 11 dipping tanks in the New Hanover Magisterial District had been destroyed. There was and still is today a large number of Sarmcol workers who come from this area. Their explanation for the anger coincides with the official source.

"There was problem with the cattle. The black's cattle is dying but not the farmers. The women is come out on strike against dipping. ... with the dipping there were crowd of women coming with stones and putting inside the dips because they said no cattle must be dipped. It was happening from Lions River, Howick down to Pietermaritzburg, ... Swamande the dips were closed, ... the police were guarding the dip to stop the women from closing them. The men can go to prison easily then women, thats why women were doing the job."

(Interviews).

Workers reported that Dips were attacked in areas as far off as Bergville,

"It was well known because although there were no papers or pamphlets but as soon as we would arrive we would inform the people, 'such action is on'."

(Interview, Godfrey Labazana)

One area which seemed to escape unscathed was that of Impendle.

From the activity of 1959 it is possible to draw out three points:

1. These activities were ANC rather than SACTU linked and as such did not directly involve the Sarmcol workers, which meant their involvement was peripheral to the campaigns.
2. Even though it was the women who took up the campaigns, workers and the state still believed that

men were behind them. This is a reflection of the patriarchal nature of our society.

3. As during the potato boycott, the people of Impendle did not take part in these campaigns. An explanation for the general reluctance of the Impendle people to become involved in resistance has not been explored fully in this thesis. One hypothesis is that it could have been as a result of the control of the chief over this area.

#### 5.4.8 1961 STAY AT HOME

This was the last general strike called by the Congress Alliance. Its aim was to protest the celebrations around the declaration of the South African Republic. The ANC was calling for a National Convention of all political leaders to work out alternatives. The organisation of the stayaway centered around SACTU organised factories (Luckhardt & Wall, 1980). The Sarmcol workers participated in this stayaway and according to Luckhardt and Wall (1980) they brought the factory to a complete standstill, with all 1500 workers out on strike.

"That time was making the Republic, Republic Day. Was a strike that Day to stand up to the Republic, Congress wasn't like, was never vote for it. We stay away for three days, after three days we come back to work. The police and army are there ... aeroplanes, police and army everywhere round here trying to make people go back to work. People are

running down to the dam and hiding. But it never happened. We was told that time we strike Friday, Monday, Tuesday was three days."

(Interviews).

#### 5.4.9 THE STATES' RESPONSE

In 1961 Gwala received another banning order, however, this was only temporary and for a short period of time. In 1962 he received a further banning order which effectively made him organisationally useless. Moses Bhengu, a member of the Commercial and Distributive Workers' Union took over the organising of the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union and the SACTU Local Committee. He also eventually received a banning order (court record). By 1962 the Pietermaritzburg SACTU Local Committee had ceased to exist as a result of these bannings (Luckhardt & Wall, 1980). While the ANC was banned SACTU was not, however, state repression effectively destroyed SACTU organisation country-wide. This also resulted in a decline in organisation at Sarmcol.

"He (Gwala) wrote us a letter saying he can't hold any meetings with us, he is banned for life from holding meetings with us. He left nobody inside, but there was one guy Felix Ngcobo who also tried to organise but he failed. He was a worker in the factory. He didn't have the right education or information to feed us because he was afraid

of the police to contact those people in Pietermaritzburg. ... The organisation continued for a few months and then we find that it dropping, there was no leader. ... People from outside did come for a few periods and then they left. They were just scared, with stories that Gwala's been arrested and they will be the next to be arrested. The one from inside was Baba Zondi. The police did come to him at the hostel and there was a lot of intimidation, harassment. But they couldn't arrest him because they had no grounds."  
(Interviews).

Gwala was later arrested and sentenced on 11 June 1964 to eight years imprisonment. He was convicted of having conspired with persons for training outside the Republic for furthering the aims and objectives of the ANC (Court record).

And so the organisation and gains which the Sarmcol workers had built up and made during the 1950's was broken and destroyed. But the lessons were not forgotten.

The most important ideological lesson of this period was worker unity. It was something which Gwala preached about, but he did not only talk about it, the workers also experienced its benefits. It was through unity that they won their demands for overalls and a pound a day. They also learnt about the improvements

which come with a Union. Without a union it is difficult for the workers to maintain unity. Management soon pushes back the frontier of control and workers lose the gains they have made. SACTU also taught them solidarity with other workers and oppressed people. For the Sarmcol workers there were no structural links between factories. However, through the different campaigns they took up united action, eg the potato boycott, the 1961 stay-away. But also they felt themselves to be part and parcel of a broader dispossessed black population. The ANC itself was not strong in Howick. Most organisation occurred through the SACTU presence. Workers used their factory based links with each other to discuss community issues.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

As argued in the introduction, this chapter begins introducing the themes of human agency, showing how the Sarmcol workers intervened to shape the structural forces of history.

It outlines the unions and campaigns of the 1950's, recounting in detail the different events. It then makes the point that these were lived experiences of only 31,6 percent of workers and then poses the question if only one third of workers were working at Sarmcol during that time how could these experiences have influenced the consciousness of today.

The answer to this question it suggests, lies in the role of the grassroots intellectuals and particularly with experiences from the past, in the part played by Zondi as the imbongi. Zondi, in absorbing and intertwining individual experiences from the past with community experiences, has welded together a common history. However, it would be difficult to argue that this is invented tradition. The experiences on which this history is based are real, the lessons and the consciousness which develop as a result of these experiences are based on the meaning attached to these experiences which develops as a result of the dialectical relationship between the community and the grassroots intellectuals.

Zondi is allowed to play the role he does i.e. sage, philosopher, poet, recorder and interpreter of history by consent of the rest of the community. He reflects, as argued above, their real experiences. And the community gives him their consent to interpret these experiences and offer advice for the future.

However, Zondi is not alone in his role of grassroots intellectual. As argued above, there are the other old men who have lived through the same times as he and who play a ratifying role. But more important are the shop stewards. They are the visible leadership and intellectuals of the Sarmcol workers. As argued above, the shop stewards represent the younger generation of the Sarmcol workers. It is argued that Zondi's role as imbongi strengthens both the position of the shop

stewards generally and his position as shop steward and vice versa. It is in the present struggle of the 1980's and in directing the future that the shop stewards play a vital role. It is intended to examine this role of the shop stewards in more detail in the following two chapters.

**CHAPTER 6 THE POWER OF ORGANISATION - THE METAL AND  
ALLIED WORKERS UNION**

**6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The experiences of unionisation in the 1950's were very different from that of the 1970's. The workers were different, the style and method of organising was different and the structural context was different. Firstly, the face of the Sarmcol workforce changed during the 1970's (see chapter 5 and below) - new workers were employed, workers who hadn't experienced unionisation during the 1950's and who hadn't directly experienced labour tenancy. Secondly, the organisational style of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) was also quite different from that of the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union. The 'new' unions of the 1970's were based on: an emphasis on shop steward structures, shop floor democracy and accountability and industrial unionism. Thirdly, there was the different political and economic climate. The Sarmcol labour force was larger than in the 1950's. As the 1970's drew to an end Sarmcol began a process of rationalisation and expansion (see chapter 4). As a whole the South African economy was more industrialised. The political situation was also quite

different. As far as the state was concerned progressive organisation had been crushed and it was resolved not to let any new developments in this area go unnoticed or unhindered.

Despite these differences, there was still a degree of continuity between the two experiences of unionisation. This chapter has two fundamental aims. Firstly to explore this continuity, arguing that it plays a vital role in the formation of consciousness. Secondly, to examine the position of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union at the Sarmcol factory and the subsequent struggle of the Sarmcol workers. Initially the two strands, outlined above, could be seen as inseparable. However, as time passed and the 1970's became the 1980's, so the earlier experiences became more of a myth. Thus, the past was the raw material, but it was available to be used for new trade union organising initiatives. There is a fine tension between the continuity of the SACTU experience and the discontinuity of new modes of trade union organisation.

The 1960's witnessed not only the banning of the ANC and the movement underground of SACTU but also an influx of new workers to Sarmcol. 15.1 percent began to work between 1965 and 1970 (the workers employed since 1966 make up 43 percent of the current workers). Some of these were older men, labour tenants evicted from white farms and forced into factory work while others were seeking their first job at the factory which had employed their fathers and their neighbours (see chapter 3). From this latter grouping of men are to be

found a large number of today's shop stewards (see below).

Simon Ngubane started working at Sarmcol in 1973. He had completed Standard 5 and was 18 years old. His parents had both been born on the same white farm, yet before his birth they had moved to Tweedie, an informal semi-urban settlement on the other side of Midmar Dam. Here they kept chickens and goats and had access to about 200 meters of land on which they grew a variety of vegetables. His father worked at Sarmcol, and it was from him that Simon learnt about the struggles. His father told him about Harry Gwala, the police and the union. In fact Simon could tell you as much about the 1950's as can the older workers who lived through that era. The family was removed from Tweedie and with the establishment of Mpophomeni moved there in 1969.

Moses Madalala was born on a white farm in the Howick area. His family left the farm when he was still very young, moving to another farm. However, by 1956 they were living in the reserve area of Inchanga. He found his first job at Hilton College. His older brother was employed at Sarmcol. Not only did his brother eventually find him a job at Sarmcol, but he also told him about Gwala and the union.

By the 1970's Sarmcol employed 2000 workers (Labour Monitoring Group, 1985). This was made up of workers who had lived through the turbulent period of the 1950's. They had experienced the power of a united workforce, they knew what a union could achieve for its

members but they had also experienced the disillusionment of the 1960's. They had seen what happens when the leadership gets arrested, they had watched their organisation collapse and the gains they had won being taken from them. However, there were also the 'new' workers. In many cases the children of the old workers. They had also heard about the 1950's, but in most cases they only knew of the victories, the charismatic Harry Gwala, the fiery speeches and the spurning of the police.

## 6.2 THE EARLY 1970'S

In the early 1970's there were two political dynamics operating in the Howick area which affected the Sarmcol workers. It is argued that both played an equally important role in those early days of unionisation at the Sarmcol factory. Thus an understanding of this continuity is a crucial link in the present consciousness of the Sarmcol workers.

Firstly Gwala's sentence ran its course and he returned to Pietermaritzburg and Howick in mid 1972. His previous banning order (see chapter 5) had expired in 1968 while he was in prison. However, as soon as he was released from prison in June 1972 he was given a further five year banning and restriction order (Cullen Library, Box AH1426/Za2.1 File 3, Letter from SACTU to TUCSA). It seems co-incidental that he arrived at the birth of today's independent trade union movement. The

new Sarmcol workers did not recognise him and did not know that he was around. However, the older men, those active during the 1950's met up with him again. Many Sarmcol workers were afraid and avoided contact with him, while others met and talked to him (Interviews). Gwala still gave the workers the same message of unity and organisation.

"There were one or two union meetings in Howick but I never went to any of those. I don't know if Gwala was there. But he might have been, when Gwala came out there was quite a buzz. He's a legend in that area. So central before he went in. ... (But he) was banned and restricted, he never came to the union offices. He was under 6.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m. house arrest. He set up a laundry service. He was battling and things were hard in those days - there was no money like today. Nobody ever brought him (to the union offices) and he never came as such. But he'd know what was happening. We never talked about it much. Pietermaritzburg was a small community. Harry was a senior member of the ANC and people kept in touch. It was natural that people would speak to him. ..."

(Interview Omar Badsha)

Secondly, to these workers, who remembered Gwala, it was prophetic when shortly after Gwala's appearance two 'white girls' arrived, handing out pamphlets and urging workers to join a union. The General Factory Workers' Benefit Fund (GFWBF) had started in Pietermaritzburg in

1973. Members of Wages Comm at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg as well as the Central Administration Services (CAS) were involved in organising the GFWBF. Most of the first factories to join were metal factories - Alkan Aluminum, Scottish Cables and Sarmcol. The executive of the GFWBF was largely metal workers as was the Chair'man' of the Pietermaritzburg Branch (Interview Omar Badsha). The dominance of metal workers in the GFWBF is not surprising when one examines industry in Pietermaritzburg. Pietermaritzburg is dominated by three industrial sectors. Metal, engineering and related industries account for approximately 30 percent of employment in the region. Secondly leather and footwear employ another 25 percent. However trade unionism in this sector was dominated by Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) affiliates. And thirdly there was the timber, wood and paper sector which employed 20 percent of the workforce (LMG, 1985). The initiative for unionisation came from the Sarmcol workers themselves. When

"... the Sarmcol workers ... heard about the GFWBF being formed they came to the office and joined us."

(Interview, Omar Badsha)

Baba Zondi was one of the first to join MAWU. Omar Badsha, a union organiser at the time continues the story,

"We used to go and recruit at Scottish and Sarmcol. Sarmcol it was twice a week. Once early

in the morning and on the second day late in the afternoon - to catch both shifts. We were trying to recruit and collect subs for GFWBF. ... We would sit outside the factory on pension days and the old guys would be around, who would speak to the workers coming out of the factory about the union. One day we got chatting to them and they started telling us about the old union and about Gwala. It was never clear, but always a legend. ... In the early 1970's we had a few indian workers but it was mainly african. There were also coloured workers but I never came across them, they had one member but I can't remember his name. Zondi would come to the office bringing cards of workers, people who's money they had collected. ... Organisation grew rapidly in Alkan, Scottish Cable also but still a struggle. And slowly workers from Sarmcol started trickling in, but already a representative number, but then into GFWBF, but Zondi started pushing for a union together with people from Scottish and Alkan. So MAWU was launched in Pietermaritzburg. It was the first union."

With the launch of MAWU Harriet Bolton (Secretary of the Textile Workers' Union) contacted Sarmcol management in connection with MAWU organising at Sarmcol. The company promised to come back to her on the issue but never did (FOSATU Records, undated report) One of the first organisers of the new union was Moses Mbanjwa. Jennette Cunningham from Pietermaritzburg Wages Comm also assisted.

Workers who joined MAWU in this early period elucidated different reasons as to why they joined the union. In examining these reasons the theme of continuity between past and present becomes clear. In many cases, the older workers, in particular, saw the union as the union - whether it was Gwala's or MAWU, SACTU or Howick Rubber.

"I'm not clear about the year (I joined the union - but a european girl came to organise. I joined because it came to help the workers. MAWU wanted the workers to unite on the issue of wages. ... The first time the organisers came to the road on the way to the village asking us to have a meeting in the open space. The police came and dispersed the meeting saying we couldn't have a meeting on the open space."

(Interview, K.P.Gwala)

"I remembered Harry Gwala's words, that's why I joined MAWU. Harry Gwala used to tell us 'There will be people coming to talk for us to the management', so I decided to join MAWU. I join MAWU until now."

(Interview, Ntombele)

"I realised the hardship we experienced being alone. I had no-one to put my grievance on. Then I decided I had no option but to join. Babi Zondi was the foreteller of the union. We are in the same department."

(Interview Godfrey, Lubazane)

"Me I didn't scratch from the union I join the union right through from Gwala until now. I say to Phineas take R20, R20 because I don't want my name to be scratched. I didn't leave, I join from Gwala till now. Because they help me if sometime they chase me from Sarmcol because Sarmcol they chase anybody anyhow. Doesn't matter how old you are they chase you anyhow and not give you a cent."

(Interview, Simeon Mhlongo)

"I heard from Gwala and I joined. Came union after Gwala I joined when it came. It continued till now."

(Interview, Dombese Mkize)

Sarmcol management attempted to counter union organisation in two ways. Firstly they, decided to re-elect the Works Liaison Committee from amongst the labour force at large (FOSATU Records, FOSATU AS 1615 Mfm 4,1, MAWU, File: Sarmcol, Sarmcol Pamphlet 25 April 1974).

"Management wanted to know how many people had joined the union. They were against the union. Only a few workers had joined the union and management asked them to leave the union and join their organisation. It was a liaison committee."

(Interview Gwala).

However, the union used the Works Liaison Committee to attempt to push workers' demands<sup>32</sup>. Baba Zondi who was a member of the Liaison Committee explained the strategy.

"Management was choosing those people who was standing for workers, ... that time I being elect(ed) for works liaison committee and then the management was appoint me. 'Cause I got train(ing) for trade union I told the workers what the management was discussing and I have to go down to the (union) office and tell them what management say, what decision, what management was taking. And the minutes what we was give(in) at the works-liaison committee, was taking those minutes to give it to Jeff (Schriener) and organiser to see that and he was teaching us how we must operate that meeting. What to put to management, what the workers they want. But you won't get that thing now. ... When a thing is supporting a management they

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32. This tactic as well as similar ones used by other factories in the Pietermaritzburg area (interview Omar Badsha) contrasts sharply with struggles at other factories over liaison and works committees (see Anon, 1976). This contrast is enough to suggest that the role of works and liaison committees in early trade union organising strategies is an area in need of indepth research.

bring it quick when, that thing is workers they want something, they don't bring it quick, it take time."

Secondly, they utilised the states repressive machinery. Trade union organisers at Sarmcol suffered continued harassments from the police which made their task very difficult.

"The police have been more active in the Howick area with regard to the Union, than in any other area where it operates. This implies Sarmcol Management demands police surveillance itself - a suspicion confirmed by workers, the security guard at the gate of the factory (who is told to report our every arrival), Mr Samson and the police themselves.

During the four months the Union has visited the factory, the police have questioned, taken names and addresses and car numbers at least once a week - sometimes every day of the three days we go there."

(FOSATU Records, FOSATU AD 1615 Mfm 4,1 Metal and Allied Workers' Union, File: Sarmcol, undated report)

Despite the strategies of Sarmcol management organisation continued. On the 29 July 1974 Sarmcol workers held their first public meeting under MAWU. 160 workers attended with 60 workers joining the union. MAWU could now claim a membership of over 200. At this

meeting one of the workers reminded the others about the union of Harry Gwala and how they fought for and won R2 per day and overalls (see chapter 5). However, other workers were worried about victimisation of union members. Once more the image of Gwala's union was called upon - workers were reminded what the union had done for them and that working conditions were improved and higher wages were obtained with Mr Gwala (Cullinan Library, FOSATU AD 1615 Mfm 4,1 MAWU, File: Sarmcol, minutes of meeting 29 July).

A Kupagani food scheme was set up outside the Sarmcol factory with the help of the Union. Sarmcol management once again caused harassments. The police were called and two students and the union organiser - Moses Mbanjwa were arrested.

" ... they were taken by the police to the police station and all workers come to the police station to ask what is happening to these chaps. Because these chaps was asking that to the magistrate. Whose putting them through court must sign but magistrate refused to sign. In that point they didn't put him in prison they leave them and they go ..."

(Interview, Detho Sibisi)

On the 17 July 1974 MAWU, in a letter to Sarmcol management, made its first bid for the recognition of the union by the Company. On the 23rd September 1974 Sarmcol responded,

"For many years our management has promoted the establishment of effective communication

with our non-White employees through the medium of a Works Liaison Committee. Indeed the Work Liaison Committee system at Sarmcol has been in existence for more than 20 years as an established and effective channel of communication between management and employees on matters of common interest in the field of employment conditions, welfare and good industrial and employee relations.

Our policy is directed towards progressive development in the effectiveness of the existing system, and this has been recently extended to include separate sub-committees within the various departments.

In the circumstances we cannot accede to your request to recognise the Metal and Allied Workers' Union and consequently the points raised in your letter of 15th August are not of relevance."

(FOSATU Records, FOSATU AD 1615 Mfm 4.1, Metal and Allied Workers Union, File: Sarmcol, Letter from Sampson to MAWU, 23 September 1987).

After denying any negotiation over recognition Sarmcol management used every opportunity to discredit and discourage MAWU. The agenda of the meeting of Sarmcol workers on the 26 August reflects this. Workers were called to discuss the following issues: Kupagani goods would no longer be on sale as a result of management

actions; allegations against the union by management; and, the election of shop stewards.

At a Works Liaison Committee meeting on the 3 October Zondi once more enquired whether Sarmcol would be willing to allow the Trade Union to represent the workers. Management once more refused. Their refusal was based on the grounds that the Works Liaison Committee was the best way to solve any problems within the company. They stated that they had already informed the union of their refusal and asked the representatives please to inform their sub-committees of managements position (FOSATU Records, FOSATU AD 1615 Mfm 4,1, MAWU File: Sarmcol, Minutes of Works Liaison Committee Meeting, 3 October 1974).

If the initial attempts at union organisation were frustrated at every turn by Sarmcol management it was the State which attempted to smash them outright by banning union organisers Moses Mbanje and Jennette Cunningham. A new organiser was employed - Moses Ndlova - and MAWU continued organising. But once more the state reacted and organizer Moses Ndlova was banned.

"1973 when the union was starting to organise the police were up, up, up. That time the management say ja now you must choose your people to represent you, to talk on your behalf. Because they saw the union want to come inside, if the union come inside have more trouble. Big argument until the people

was elected. ... Police were hot that time. So lots of people were put in jail. Some girls went away overseas. We heard Moses Ndlovu was jailed too. What happened inside was management got a chance to introduce the liaison committee. ... Liaison committee was playing inside the company. The union come back again. When the union comes back the liaison committee was finished."

(Interview Moses Madala)

However, the union continued to recruit members and explain to the workers the purpose and necessity of a trade union.

The workers realised that the liaison committee could not achieve their demands. The only way to get rid of it was to organise the workers into the trade union. Baba Zondi explained how it was done, using the example of Simon Ngubane,

"... using a lecture, that time small group, it grew, grew, grew, teaching them what a trade union want, what we should need, and what we should ask. Must see the management are supposed to give us this. And the people was join the trade union now, like Simon Ngubane, he was one of the men working on Hose I. When we talking with him, give him a small book. Now the people was like him, he was always teaching the people, the trade union was growing up inside the Sarmcol. Now the people was like, when he got sometimes

case, come to Ngubane and ask him, now we give him idea to go to that case, win that case. Now the people is come, now they see the trade union is working alright."

In 1979 MAWU again approached BTR Sarmcol for recognition. Sarmcol refused to negotiate the issue claiming that unregistered trade unions were illegal. Finally, Sarmcol conceded that they would consider negotiations if MAWU was registered under the Labour Relations Act (MAWU, October 1985).

"The time the union come back people were afraid to join because they say the union is not registered. Comes back 80's registered, all join now. Most make the people to join the union is bad management inside the factory. See the people got 30 years, 35 years, sick people, injured people coming from hospital when he comes back he's gone. He's join the union."

(Interview, Moses Madalala)

MAWU was officially a registered trade union in 1982. Once more they wrote to BTR Sarmcol asking to meet in order to discuss recognition. Sarmcol refused, at a meeting in 1983, unless a number of pre-conditions were met by the union. At this point 37 percent of the weekly paid employees were members of MAWU (MAWU, October 1985).

### 6.3 "MAWU COMES INSIDE"

It was the retrenchments due to the mechanisation and rationalisation at Sarmcol (see Chapter 4) of the early 1980's that gave MAWU the opportunity to recruit many more members as well as to sign a preliminary recognition agreement with Sarmcol.

"After management was retrenching their workers inside the Sarmcol. Now the people's see more then is not a trade union, is not safe. Now they starting all inside the company to join the trade union. Was late because a lot of people was retrenched. Those that was a member of trade union, the trade union was trying to push to the management when the people was retrenched. Must tell the workers why you retrench, why they must retrench they say they short of job. Must discuss when you say you got a short of job and you must have a proposal how many people you got to retrench, for what reason, why, you got no job, when you got no job you must take a man to another department. And discussing about that. Some of those people that was retrenched, there was a case what the trade union was putting, get money."

(Interview, Baba Zondi).

In 1983 MAWU resorted to legal action to protect its members from arbitrary retrenchments. The union took Sarmcol to the Industrial Court alleging that the company had committed an unfair labour practice in retrenching workers without notice, negotiation or compensation. An out of court settlement was reached between MAWU and Sarmcol.

It was agreed that Sarmcol would pay R7 500,00 to the retrenched workers and conclude a preliminary recognition agreement with the union. The terms of the recognition agreement were to grant stop-order rights to the union, follow a specified retrenchment procedure, grant the union access to the canteen outside of working hours and once the union became representative negotiate a full recognition agreement within three months (MAWU, October 1985). Among the workers retrenched at this time were many old SACTU activists including Ntombela from Impendle. Within two months MAWU had achieved 51 percent membership amongst the weekly paid workers.

"I decided to join because when workers were retrenched the union wanted to know why and spoke for your rights."

(Interview, Absolom Ndlovu)

"I joined the union in 1979 ... I felt it could help us with wages and retrenchments" (Interview, Simon Ngubane (2)).

"I heard about the union a long time ago but I was fearing that we would be dismissed. ...

We were coming from lunch. They asked us to sign but we would refuse while it was outside. It seemed then that there were people from inside who were part of MAWU. Then it was said that it would be right to see how many had joined. Find out how many. Then management challenged them and said must come inside so it can be seen who wants MAWU and who doesn't because they were fostering the Liaison Committee. We said no we want MAWU and not the Liaison Committee. That is how we joined, it was 1983. ... We joined this time because management gave them power because they challenged those who had joined to come inside and let people choose. That gave us the impression that MAWU is not bad but something to be talked about."

(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

However, two years were to pass, with at least twenty meetings between the union representatives and Sarmcol management and still they were no closer to the signing of the recognition agreement. During this period workers undertook a series of actions - go slows, canteen boycott, stoppages, demonstrations, work-to-rule, buying shares in the company and addressing share-holders meetings - in an attempt to force the company to sign the recognition agreement.

On 10 November 1983 BTR Sarmcol applied for a Conciliation Board and to the Industrial Court for an order requiring MAWU to negotiate in good faith (BTR

Sarmcol's Representations, November 1985). The application was settled in December 1983. The following joint statement was released to the press:

"BTR Sarmcol (Howick) and the Metal & Allied Workers Union today agreed to an out of court settlement of an application to the Industrial Court brought by the Company against MAWU for an order to compel MAWU to resume negotiations on the matters of severance pay and procedural aspects of recognition.

It was agreed that the parties would meet again in the New Year with a view to:

- 1) completing negotiations for an agreement detailing the procedural aspects of MAWU's recognition;
- 2) establishing a mutually acceptable severance pay policy;
- 3) setting up wage negotiations in April 1984 for review of wages to be effective as of the first pay week in June 1984."

However, throughout the year retrenchments continued<sup>33</sup>.

On the 21 November 1984 MAWU applied for a Conciliation Board to consider disputes on the issue of recognition

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33. see Chapter 4. Sarmcol's weekly paid labour force was reduced from 1 130 in June 1983 to 964 by the time of the strike (April 1985).

and severance pay for retrenched workers. On 11 December 1984 workers went out on a wild-cat strike, but were persuaded to return to work by union officials. The Conciliation Board was appointed on 12 March 1985 but could not persuade the parties to come to any agreement. Once more workers resorted to strike action from 12-15 March. A deadlock in negotiations was reached on April 10 1985 (Application by MAWU for a Conciliation Board, 25 October 1985; Application by BTR Sarmcol for a Conciliation Board, Respondents Representations and Respondents Statement, 29 November 1985).

The main disagreements centered around the retrenchment procedure, the amount of severance pay, the last in first out procedure, as well as shop stewards rights. Given the history of retrenchments and job insecurity at Sarmcol this was an issue over which the workers refused to back down.

In February 1985 MAWU had balloted its members to determine the support for strike action. All but four members voted in agreement of a legal strike. On April 30 the workers went out on strike and three days later Sarmcol fired them. On the 3 May the workers were locked out of the factory and the South African Police were called to disperse them. Sarmcol refused to reinstate the workers and began employing 'scab' labour.

#### 6.4 COMMUNITY STRUGGLES

In chapter 3 the process of proletarianisation was examined. During the period that MAWU was organising in the factory, struggles were happening in the communities where the Sarmcol workers live. These were struggles revolving around issues of rent, bus fare increases and political organisation. It is argued that it is important to present these struggles if one is to understand the role played by MAWU and the workers in their individual communities as well as in the wider community, after the strike.

At present the Sarmcol workers live in the wider region around Howick with the majority living in Mpophomeni (see Table 6).

**TABLE 6: BREAKDOWN OF STRIKERS BY RESIDENCE**

<u>AREA</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Mpophomeni	39.5
Impendle	9.9
Mafakathini	8.1
Haza	6.4
Sweetwaters	5.8
Nxamalala	5.8
Mevana	2.9
Howick West/South	2.3
Wartburg/New Hanover	2.3
	-----
	83.0

The other workers can be found in the locations around the area eg KwaMncane, Zwartkop, Lionskop, Mashingeni, Mpande and Elandskop. It would seem that these workers come from very scattered areas. However, in reality this is not the case. All these places are to be found in the semi-rural areas which stretch from Pietermaritzburg to Howick. While the distance, as the crow flies, is not much the roads are bad and public transport unreliable. As a result many of those who do not live in Mpophomeni stay in the Sarmcol compound or hostels (see Table 7).

**TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE PER HOME AREA OF HOSTEL/COMPOUND DWELLERS**

<u>AREA</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
Wartburg	100.0
Impendle	88.2
Sweetwaters	80.0
Zwartkop	75.0
Mafakathini	71.4
Mpende	66.7
Mashingeni	66.7
Nxamalala	50.0
KwaMncane	50.0
Haza	36.4

Thus the Sarmcol workers came from three 'types' of areas:

1. The urban townships which are located in the vicinity of the town of Howick. These are

Mpophomeni, Mevana and Howick West and South. These areas account for some 44.7 percent of the workers.

2. The area which could be loosely termed 'the locations'. These are the areas of Impendle, Bergville, Swayimane etc. In total 14.5 percent of workers come from these places.
3. Finally the peri-urban area which borders the city of Pietermaritzburg. Within this area are found the settlements of Sweetwaters, Nxamalala, Mashingeni, Zwartkop etc. Resident in this peri-urban area are some 40,6 percent of the workers. Each of these areas will be described in detail below.

#### 6.4.1. COMMUNITIES OF THE SARMCOL WORKERS

##### 6.4.1.1. The Urban Areas

###### (a) Mpophomeni

Mpophomeni was established to accommodate those affected by urban relocation from Zenzele and some farm workers (see chapter 3). Even though it was ready for occupation from 1968 most of the residents seem to have moved there after 1978 (67,7 percent). This is a formally constructed township. The main roads are gravel, and the rest sand. The streets are lit by street lights, however, these are very sparse and weak and are only found in the main areas. Most of the houses consist of four rooms (72,7 percent), yet there is also a significant number made up of two rooms (19,7 percent). The bucket system operates for most

residents (83,6 percent). For 52,3 percent of workers their only access to water is through a tap in the street. The township is not electrified and for 80,0 percent of the workers candles are their only source of light.

In terms of facilities Mpophomeni is better provided for than other areas: there is a community hall, a clinic, a beerhall and some shopping facilities. However, there is also no postal service and very few telephones. There are five schools in the township; two junior primary schools, two senior primary schools and a high school.

Access to land has been limited and thus very few residents have any kind of livestock. Of the Sarmcol workers it was found that 27,3 percent kept chickens. Even then in 72,0 percent of cases this was less than ten chickens. 58,7 percent of workers planted some vegetables in the small patch in front of their houses; the most common crops being mealies (23,8 percent), potatoes (34,1 percent), cabbage (53,4 percent) and spinach (51,1 percent).

(b) Mevana

Mevana is the oldest township in the Howick area (see chapter 3). Today Mevana is very similar to Mpophomeni in terms of facilities. Houses are three and four roomed built of brick/concrete. There is not much land for planting - just the garden plot. And there is no room for livestock; only chickens of which the average

number owned per striker is between six and ten.

#### 6.4.1.2. The 'Locations'

##### (a) Impendle

The Impendle district begins some 60-80 km away from Mpophomeni. It is a large area which falls under the jurisdiction of Chief John Zuma and the KwaZulu authorities. 35 percent of the 9.9 percent of Sarmcol workers who presently reside in Impendle were born in the district while the rest moved there over a lengthy period of time.

The area is much less regulated than the urban areas. The roads are mostly sand. The houses are built by their owners and in most cases are constructed of daub and wattle. Access to water is very random - 35 percent of workers have a tap in their house while 31,1 percent have no water source. The sewerage is a pit system. There is no electricity in the area i.e. no street lights and 92,9 percent of people use candles as their only source of light.

Clinics, schools and a postal service (to main centers, usually the shop or the school) are the only facilities provided by the authorities.

Given the nature of the area, residents are more easily able to keep livestock than those in the more urban areas eg Mpophomeni. 76.5 percent of workers living here keep chickens (67 percent less than 10). 52,9

percent keep goats (88 percent between 6 and 15). And 70 percent keep cows (90 percent less than 10).

58,8 percent of workers who live in Impendle plant vegetables. 58 percent have a small patch, while 33 percent have access to +/- one acre of land. Mealies and potatoes are the most popular crops; and, depending on the size of the land, a number of other crops might be grown as well.

#### 6.4.1.3. Peri-Urban Areas

These areas which fall under KwaZulu, are all very similar in characteristic. The residents drifted into them between the mid-1960's and the mid-1970's, with very few arriving in the 1980's.

The roads are have a gravel and sand surface, there are with no street lights and the houses are constructed of daub and wattle. The pit-system is used and access to water is extremely limited. Most residents rely on candle light. In most cases there is no postal service or telephones and shops are scarce. Only a clinic and schools are provided.

However, residents have greater access to land then do those who live in the urban areas of Mpophomeni and Mevana. As a result it is possible to keep livestock and plough. Between sixty-five and eighty percent of workers who live in this area keep chickens. Their flocks range in number between eleven and twenty.

Thirty percent of workers keep goats, however the number ranges between one and five. Between thirty-five and fifty percent keep cows but it is never more than ten cows.

There is also much more land available for ploughing. There is roughly an equal division between those who have a small plot to plant and those who have one or more acres. The most common crops are mealies, potato and cabbage.

#### 6.4.1.4 Conclusion

The area of present residence is as argued above (see Chapter 3) the direct result of the structural forces which affected the lives of labour tenants as well as the State's relocation program. And the residential location of the striker has in turn affected their specific experience of community struggle and politics.

Mpophomeni is a new community, created by the relocation of a large number of people from different areas. However, the one thing many of them had in common was working at Sarmcol. It is argued that this experience formed a base from which it was possible to tackle community issues more successfully than those workers who lived in other areas<sup>34</sup>

#### 6.4.2 BUS BOYCOTT

The long distance from Mpophomeni to Sarmcol was a concern expressed when the location of the township was

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34. The relationship between these community struggles, which occurred during 1982/3 when MAWU was beginning to achieve 51+ percent membership at Sarmcol and organisation in the factory has not been examined. However, given the nature of the Mpophomeni community it is hypothesised that there must have been a reciprocal and complementary relationship between organisation and struggle in the two areas.

first discussed (see chapter 3). At the time it was decided to build a tar access road and subsidise transport costs. However, the issue of bus fares was a potentially explosive one which erupted in November 1982.

"The start of the boycott came from when the bus fares were raised - all the people were in the struggle."

(Interview, K.P. Gwala).

"The issue started to be discussed in the buses that fares going up and we should leave the buses. On that date though there wasn't a formal meeting people started to walk. And those that weren't aware that things were coming hot, they left the buses, all walk."

(Interview, Godfrey Lubazane).

And so the Sarmcol workers walked to work. In a move that distinguishes Mpophomeni from other areas throughout the country the Community Council supported the boycott claiming the increase was introduced without consultation.

"Bus fares were suddenly raised very high without the community being consulted. The councils called a meeting and we decided to boycott buses. By this time a youth group had been formed and they helped in organising this."

(Interview, Andy Zondi).

Taxi drivers also expressed their solidarity by dropping their fares from 50c to 40c. But the majority of workers walked.

"We were on strike for three months if I'm not mistaken. So by early in the morning, 3 o'clock must be on your way to work."  
(Interview, Godfrey Lubazane).

Once again the action resulted in police harassment. Roadblocks were set up to check on overloading and 'pirate taxi's'.

"They (the police) would stop the car. Everybody who was inside except the owner was made to get out and walk."  
(Conversation with Madala, actor in The Long March).

Sarmcol management also entered the fray.

"Sarmcol management had a bad bad attitude towards our bus boycott. They were so angry that they talked to Mr Shaw and bought a bus which they labelled at the side saying for Sarmcol workers, yet it was just the same Mr Shaw's bus. ... In fact you would be fired if you came late, lucky that people were just punctual. ..."  
(Interview, Godfrey Lubazane).

"The management talked with the owner of the buses and gave one bus to collect Sarmcol

workers and wrote Sarmcol outside while it is still owned by the same people. We found out and resisted that. No change with the money, still asking 37c, just changed the name."  
(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

A mass meeting in December 1982 decided to continue the boycott. The boycott finally ended in 1983 when Impendle Bus Service was bought out by Taros Transport.

"Finally that owner was chased away then the indian guy went in. It was getting ok now."  
(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

"councillors then found an alternative bus company. ..."  
(Interview, Andy Zondi).

So with the end of the bus boycott the Mpophomeni community had experienced their first struggle and victory as a united community.

#### 6.4.3 RENT BOYCOTT

As outlined above, Mpophomeni was not one of the showcase townships. The lack of care given to the township has been a longstanding grievance between residents and KwaZulu. According to the LMG (1985) KwaZulu or the Natalia Board decided to increase rents at the beginning of 1979 but didn't inform the residents properly. By the time they were properly notified four years later in 1983, they were already hundreds of

rands in arrears.

"Due to letters which said we had to pay more a meeting with councillors and people in Ulundi was called and a petition was signed that no rent was to be paid."  
(Interview, Andy Zondi).

The petition organised by the Council was signed by over 300 residents and called for the removal of the township manager. The main grievances were the poor conditions in the township.

"This location the houses too small, the roads bad, no light, no toilets. So the people spoke to the superintendent. He says that we must speak to the Vulindle people. So the people asked the people from Vulindle to come here and explain where the rent goes too. They couldn't and the people took a decision not to pay rent until the roads are fixed and the lights and toilets are built. It has continued until now."  
(Interview, K.P.Gwala).

"There was a rent increase in 1984. The people complained of bad roads, no lights, lacking houses and bad toilets. The rent boycott started up to now. The whole community was strong."  
(Interview Simon Ngubane (2)).

The mayor of Mpophomeni, Benjamin Ndlovu, maintained that despite the fact that all the councillors were

members of Inkatha, if no solution which was acceptable to the residents was forthcoming the issue would be taken to court. In April, KwaZulu officials visited Mpophomeni to listen to the grievances but they could not resolve the problems (LMG 1985). In the end the boycott was overtaken by the strike. The fired workers just did not have the money to pay rents.

"What are we going to pay with because we don't work. We don't pay till now."

(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

Thus from 1983 till the present time of writing Mpophomeni residents have not paid rents. The issue of the degenerating state of the township was finally addressed in 1986. The township authorities began a programme of tarring the streets, erecting more lights, planting trees and connecting the township to a sewerage system. But even in these matters the residents were not consulted and the upgrading programme was begun in a way which would encourage divisions in the community. For example it was announced that those residents which "owned" their houses would be required to pay for the sewerage system themselves while the cost of rented houses would be borne by the administration. At a general meeting of the workers it was decided that no-one would pay and that they would take up the issue with the township superintendent.

#### 6.4.4 COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND INKATHA

When considering the role of community councils and

Inkatha in the lives of the Sarmcol workers it is important once more to distinguish between the different areas in which the workers lived. It seems that it was only in Mpophomeni that the Community Council was significant enough to be noted by the workers. This is possibly because other areas where the workers live are rural areas which fall under Chiefs and the Tribal Authority Systems.

The Mpophomeni Community Council was elected in 1982. There were six councillors and a mayor.

"When they were first elected there was much support."

(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

Complaints were presented to the Council and then they would take the issue up with the superintendent. Initially the Council did take up the grievances of the residents (see above). But then a rift formed between them and the community they were supposed to represent.

"But in 1984 a councillor entered the superintendents house when he wasn't there and took a file. The people were upset and from that time said that they did not have a councillor. The Superintendent dismissed the councillors and they went away. Then a new superintendent came and wanted to have elections for new councillors but the people say they don't want to have a councillor system."

(Interview, K.P. Gwala).

And that was the end of the Councillor system in Mpophomeni.

In fact in 1985 their term of office ended and we wrote a petition against the election of other councillors."

(Interview, Andy Zondi).

"There were 6 councillors. They weren't interested in the community. They living here now. There is no anger against the councillors, they are no more councillors, they were expelled and there's no more elections. At the time of the elections the community said no, they not taking up our complaints so no more elections."

(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

The Community said "no" and then the councillors were no more. However, Inkatha was not quite so easy to dispose of. The initial attitude of the Sarmcol workers was ambivalent. Many of the workers interviewed, from all the areas, said that they had never joined Inkatha, that they did not know what Inkatha did for the people and they were just not interested.

"No I never joined Inkatha. So they even approached me at my home and said now we have come to let you join Inkatha. And I asked them some questions individually - what will Inkatha help me and my family and they didn't come up clear, so I told them now I am a member of the union so I cannot join 2 organisations. I haven't got enough money to pay two organisations."

(Interview Godfrey Labazane)

They also reported that Inkatha did not really have a strong presence in their area - just the business people joined. However there were a few individuals who did join Inkatha. But their subsequent association with Inkatha and the attitude of that organisation made them lose interest.

"Yes I was under Inkatha. But seeing no-one is helping us we didn't pay much attention. Even got worse when they told us about UWUSA. Now just don't like it because UWUSA tends to break down our worker organisation. Inkatha was no help to us instead they bringing UWUSA. I was a member of Inkatha but now I stop because Inkatha makes a lot of trouble. No Inkatha cells, on-one comes together. We don't do things related to Inkatha anymore. They don't care. They don't worry to come and ask us about our position. Never even one delegate. For those reasons they are not good. If they came now they will try and split our organisation."

(Interview, Stephen Khumalo).

On the whole the Sarmcol workers did not identify with Inkatha and its political philosophies of zulu nationalism. As Mr K.P. Gwala said,

"Inkatha has no presence here because our union has a presence here."<sup>35</sup>

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35. Please note that the above interviews were done before Inkatha members invaded Mpophomeni abducting and killing Phineas Sibiya, Simon Ngubane and Flomin Minikathi. The attitudes of all the

These questions will be discussed in more detail below (see chapter 8).

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

As stated in the introduction this chapter had two aims; firstly, to examine the theme of continuity and, secondly, the events leading up to the current strike.

It has been argued that the experience of unionisation in the 1950's played a crucial part in the early organisation of MAWU at Sarmcol. Workers both remembered Gwala's union and stated that these memories were part of their reason for joining MAWU. This in-itself played an important role in their present consciousness (see below).

Despite the hostility of BTR Sarmcol and harassments from the State MAWU maintained a presence at Sarmcol throughout the 1970's. They applied for recognition on two occasions 1974 and 1979. On both occasions Sarmcol refused to negotiate. Finally it was the retrenchments of the 1980's which forced Sarmcol to negotiate. However Sarmcol's attitude remained intransigent. This

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strikers have since that day changed dramatically.

finally led to a breakdown in negotiations and the current strike. Thus, against the tradition of SACTU organisation one finds the current influences of strong industrial unionism and an intransigent multi-national company.

Occurring at the same time as later organisation of the factory were community struggles in Mpophomeni. It is possible to hypothesise that organisation and struggle in either sphere strengthened organisation and struggle in the other. It is argued that this action in Mpophomeni was building a sense of community solidarity which the Sarmcol workers could call on to support their struggle against BTR Sarmcol. It is to an examination of this strike that we now turn.

**CHAPTER 7   "WE ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR DIGNITY" - THE**  
**SARMCOL STRIKE**

**7.1 INTRODUCTION**

As outlined above (see chapter 6) MAWU and BTR Sarmcol negotiated over the recognition agreement for two years. During this period workers undertook a series of actions inside the factory in order to put pressure on Sarmcol to sign the agreement. There were two wild-cat strikes, one at the end of 1984 and one during March 1985. There were also go-slows, overtime bans, a canteen boycott, and a refusal by the engineering staff to undertake maintenance work in December 1984. Conciliation boards were appointed, arbitrators negotiated but all to no avail. The recognition agreement remained unsigned. Finally, the workers lost their patience,

"The union had compromised on their demands for recognition to such an extent that they were demanding what other managers offered without pressure.

'Our final proposals for the agreement, which Sarmcol says are unreasonable, are identical to the opening offer Barlow Rand made to the

National Union of Textile Workers in their negotiations. It just shows to what level we have sunk to accommodate conservative management', he (Geoff Schreiner) said."  
(Daily News, 7 May 1985)

Workers decided to implement the results of their February strike ballot where all but four workers voted in favour of strike action. On the 30 April 1985 they went out on strike. Three days later the company fired them.

The Sarmcol workforce is an older workforce with sixty percent of the strikers being older than 40 years of age. As such they are married men (78.5 percent), with large families (81,6 percent of the strikers support between three and nine people. If this is further broken down 70 percent support families of between six and fifteen people). They are the sole breadwinners (84,3 percent). Where other members of the family are helping financially it is in 42 percent of cases the daughter, and in 26 percent of cases the wife. These women usually find employment in domestic service (36 percent). 67 percent of strikers have an educational level of std 4 or less with 23 percent having no formal education at all.

The Sarmcol workers have, at the time of writing, been on strike for 2 years and 8 months - the longest strike in the history of South African capitalism. During this time they have engaged in a series of innovative actions (Natal Witness, Natal Mercury, Daily News,

Sunday Tribune, Sowetan, Sunday Times, Business Day, City Press, Anon, 1985, participant observation) in order to protest their dismissal and secure their reinstatement. Their strategies can be broadly divided into three categories - internal political action and solidarity, international solidarity and the legal aspect. These three areas of action have been used simultaneously. They have established the Sarmcol Workers' Co-operative (SAWCO). This provides the community with some means of subsistence to sustain them during the strike, as well as being a possible alternative to employment at Sarmcol. Their present solidarity is unthinkable without their history.

This chapter chronologies the events after the strike (for a comprehensive chronology see Appendix 4). It categorises them into the three areas mentioned above. It also examines the establishment of the Sarmcol Workers Co-operative. These experiences outlined in this chapter are ones which all the Sarmcol strikers have experienced collectively. It is argued that it is these experiences which are the most informed by the experiences of the past, which have been the most argued, debated and influenced by the grassroots intellectuals. After the stay-aways, the strikes, the court-cases, the T.V. crews and the international campaigns there was the long arduous business of sitting at home, attending the weekly general meeting and waiting. It is at this point that the strike would have crumbled if it had not been for the consciousness of the Sarmcol workers.

## 7.2 INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTION AND SOLIDARITY

The campaign for reinstatement began almost as soon as they were fired. Through these campaigns the Sarmcol strikers were able to do a number of things. Firstly, they were able to draw on support not only from the communities where they lived and especially from the community of Mpophomeni, but also from the traditional chiefs of these areas. Secondly, they were able to build alliances with political organisations, a new strategy in 1985. Thirdly, the solidarity with other workers resulted not only in joint campaigns but new structures within the union movement.

Immediately the workers were fired and locked out of Sarmcol they called meetings of their communities (Mpophomeni and Howick West) to explain what had happened. They asked the communities not to 'scab' on them by applying for jobs at Sarmcol. A decision was also taken at the meeting that the community would boycott the white owned shops in Howick in an attempt to get them to approach Sarmcol management and persuade them to negotiate with the strikers. Strikers from the location areas also approached the chiefs to ask them to encourage the people living in their areas not to apply for jobs at Sarmcol. The boycott of white shops had an immediate effect on white business,

"Supermarket owner Mr Basil Skordas, whose business caters mainly for black customers,

said that in the two days since the boycott decision he had lost as much as 50% in takings."

(Natal Witness, 9 May 1985).

Shortly before the strike BTR Sarmcol and Dunlop had merged at an international level<sup>36</sup>. This gave the Dunlop workers a legitimate concern over the way in which the Sarmcol dispute was handled. Dunlop workers, from all the Dunlop factories<sup>37</sup> lost no time in requesting their managements to call on BTR Sarmcol to negotiate with MAWU. Failing, this strike ballots would be called at the plants on the same issue.

Sarmcol, as the largest and practically sole employer in the Howick area, wielded enormous economic power.

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36. According to a Press release from the chairperson of BTR's eastern region Peter Fatharly and the chairperson of Dunlop S.A. T.F. Muller - Dunlop S.A. is an indirect subsidiary of BTR because 51 percent of shares are controlled by BTR. Later the two companies were to merge their South African holdings as well.

37. There are four Dunlop factories in South Africa. Three of these - Sydney Road and Dunlop Sports in Durban and Ladysmith are organised by MAWU, the fourth in Benoni is organised by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union. All these plants have recognition agreements with the respective union.

The dismissal of the strikers was bound to have economic repercussions throughout Howick. As a result of Sarmcol employing scab labour from the Pietermaritzburg area money was flowing out. The Howick businessmen were as concerned over the future of Howick as the strikers of Mpophomeni, Mevana and Howick West.

"And now along with the boycott we have the added problem of unemployment in the local communities which are not getting money in because people from other areas are taking the money out of Howick."

(Daily News, 7 June 1985)

However, this did not mean that they were prepared to become actively involved in any way in the dispute.

"Mike Meyer, president of the Howick Chamber of Commerce said that the Chamber would not apply pressure on Sarmcol, and regretted that the dispute 'had spilt over into areas where there was no involvement'. Ron Robbins, the Howick Town Clerk, said that traders were, 'innocent bystanders in the whole affair and they could not alter the situation at all'."

(LMG 1985:96)

The workers continued to meet daily in the community hall at Mpophomeni. Food parcels were distributed and a clinic had been set up to see to the families of the striking men. At this point the community council was still playing a supportive role in the community. In a report in the Natal Witness the mayor of Mpophomeni claimed that the entire community was strongly in

support of the strike, employed residents were sharing what they had with the strikers and the community council had agreed to let the strikers use the community hall on a daily basis and would be sympathetic to those who didn't pay rent.

These meetings were very important . Shop stewards were able to report on developments and maintain discipline amongst the strikers. They also provided solidarity and support. But after a month and a half on strike, with Sarmcol refusing to budge the strikers decided it was time to remind Sarmcol of their existence.

The Annual General Meeting of MAWU was being held in Johannesburg on the 20 June 1985. A bus-load of strikers was going from Mpophomeni. They decided to use the opportunity to stage a placard demonstration outside, and deliver a letter of protest to, BTR's Headquarters. However, from the time they arrived in Johannesburg they were followed by a contingent of riot police. Even the house where they were staying was surrounded by police. The protest had to be called off - not only did the bus get lost trying to find BTR Sarmcol Headquarters but the escort made any action impossible.

The buses, including other members of MAWU's Southern Natal Branch, returned to Mpophomeni early on Sunday morning. A mass rally, to be held in the Community Hall, was planned for that day. The strikers marched around the community at daybreak calling the residents

to come to the meeting. The rally was attended by over 2 000 residents. Speeches were made by various union and community leaders. The speeches urged the strikers to be strong and hold on to the struggle and urged the community not to scab on the workers. At the end of the meeting residents marched home. They were confronted by the police<sup>38</sup> who tried to arrest one of the youth. Stones were thrown and the police fired teargas. Eventually, through the intervention of union officials, the crowd dispersed and the police left, taking up positions at the entrance to the township.

However, this was the first indication of the violence that was to come.

"A senior shop steward said: 'The police action has broken down the strict discipline which the union has maintained and we can no longer be answerable for violence in the township'."

(Natal Witness, June 25 1987)

The homes of scabs in Mpophomeni, Mafakathini and Gezobuso (Natal Mercury, 25 June 1985) were set alight over that weekend. On Monday a large group of Mpophomeni residents - mainly women and youths - stopped a bus which was entering Mpophomeni, demanding

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38. The police had arrived at 6.30a.m. that morning and, until then, had been observing proceedings from a distance.

to know if there were any scabs aboard. They then set the bus alight and killed two men - one of whom was a scab. However, strikers also alleged that the 'scabs' were making weapons inside the Sarmcol factory which they were using to attack the strikers. As a result of the violence the Commissioner at Vulindlela imposed a 21 day ban on all meetings at Mpophomeni.

Sarmcol workers decided to expand their support base - not only in an attempt to publicise the dispute and put pressure on Sarmcol, but also as a pillar for supportive action. Support groups were formed in Pietermaritzburg and Durban in early June. They were comprised of sympathetic individuals answerable to MAWU and the Sarmcol shop stewards. The function of the groups were numerous (see Introduction). The Support Groups were thus supplementary to union organisation, undertaking work that the limited union resources could not manage. Meetings were convened with community organisations, shop stewards addressed meetings and rallies and a slide-tape show was made.

Workers in other areas were also meeting to discuss how they could respond to the Sarmcol issue. The informal meetings in Durban were to consolidate themselves into the Clairwood Shop Stewards Local - today one of the strongest Locals in the country.

The strikers were no longer able to meet in Mpophomeni. They had to come up with an alternative. The shop stewards committee was expanded to include area representatives. This enabled some link to be

maintained between the leadership and the mass of strikers. An attempt to hold a meeting at the Catholic Church in the center of Howick was disbanded after intervention by the Town Clerk's office. They then decided to take their message to Pietermaritzburg. On Saturday 29 June 10 buses of Sarmcol workers descended on Pietermaritzburg. 'Breaking down' outside the city hall, the strikers had the opportunity to jump off and hand out pamphlets and stickers to passersby. The riot police, along with a sneeze machine, arrived but did not intervene. The demonstration ended with traffic police escorting the buses to a meeting at the Lay Center in Edendale. This meeting was attended by community and youth organisations who pledged their support for the Sarmcol workers' struggle. After the meeting the buses proceeded to Imbali Township which the workers then 'held' for two hours while they drove around, escorted by the youth marching and chanting in front of them, distributing pamphlets and holding impromptu meetings on street corners.

"A COSAS member remarked that this was the first time that students had been able to march in the township in solidarity with their parents without being dispersed by the police."

(LMG 1985:99)

On the 30th June the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) regional congress met. Sarmcol was the main issue for discussion. They were also meeting in the light of a recent statement, rejecting the appeal from MAWU and FOSATU to intervene in the dispute,

issued jointly by the Chamber of Industries, Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce and the Afrikaanse Sakekamer (Daily News, 17 July 1985) as well as the support shown to the strikers by the black communities of Pietermaritzburg. The idea of a work stoppage in support of the strikers was referred back to the trade union locals for discussion. Eventually FOSATU took the decision to organise a stay-away in the Pietermaritzburg region and motivate support for the issue in the rest of Natal by holding stoppages and lunch-time meetings on the 18 July (LMG, 1985).

The stayaway was first discussed with community and youth organisations on July 4. On July 6 another mass meeting was held at the Lay Center. The meeting was publicised by strikers making house visits in all the townships in the area. The platform was shared by a number of community and youth organisations. Full support was given to the idea of a stay-away but no date was announced (LMG 1985).

The following week was used to consult and organise. Meetings were held with student, civic and political organisations. According to the LMG (1985) some organisations, particularly the UDF, felt that there was no consultation and that they were presented with a finalised decision from the unions. In fact they felt that it would not be a success. To confirm their statements they pointed to a poll which indicated that only 10 percent of indian workers would support the stay-away (LMG 1985).

The actual organisation of the stay-away took place through the union networks, students and the strikers spread the call by word of mouth. The press only picked it up on the 17 July when the Natal Witness published a full page report. The Natal Mercury published a joint call by the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Industries, the Chamber of Commerce and Sakekamer on the 18 July urging workers to ignore the call. They also advised that a 'no work no pay' policy would be followed. Sarmcol's managing director Blackstock claimed that Sarmcol was not responsible for the stay-away (LMG, 1985).

The stayaway was an outstanding success. Newspaper headlines claimed "Mass Stay-away has Capital at Standstill" - and for once they were right. The stay-away was almost 100 percent effective. Even at those factories where some of the workers turned up, they were sent home, as there were not enough people to operate the production lines. A major reason for the success was the lack of transport. None of the municipal bus drivers, or KwaZulu drivers turned up for work. Private taxis also did not run. All businesses in the indian trading sector were closed (Daily News, 18 July 1985), despite the poll. Sarmcol and Huletts Aluminium were operative - workers slept on the premises the night before. Clover dairies, where there was a complete stay-away, used white schoolboys as scab labour. Most factories, in line with the official position, adopted a policy of no work no pay.

On the other hand the townships were a hive of activity. Newspapers report clashes between youths and

police in Imbali, Edendale and Sobantu. Thousands of school children stayed away from school. Barricades were set up, administration offices and beerhalls set alight. The beerhall at Mpophomeni was burnt and houses of scabs set alight. Water to the township had been cut off two days earlier so there was nothing the Howick Fire Department could do about the fires. Barricades using old cars covered with excrement from the bucket system blocked off the police. However, the police, using teargas, clashed with groups of youth.

80 percent of MAWU organised factories in Natal showed their support for the Sarmcol issue through some form of solidarity action - stayaway, demonstration, marches and stoppages. In Durban workers from Clover and Dunlop took to the street, showing their support for the dismissed workers. Workers from Hart Ltd, Umbilo; C.I. Industries in Pinetown and City Metal Products in Jacobs staged similar but smaller demonstrations. In Machadodorp Feralloys workers went on strike over the refusal of their management to send a telex to Sarmcol (LMG, 1985).

Despite the overwhelming support shown for the strikers Sarmcol still refused to budge. MAWU began to discuss the idea of extending the boycott of white shops from Howick to Pietermaritzburg. A consultation with community organisations was called for August 1st. The Pietermaritzburg Town Council, hearing rumours, began to get nervous and tried to initiate discussions between MAWU and a number of organisations including Sarmcol. A meeting did take place between MAWU and

Sarmcol, however, Sarmcol was only ready to consider re-employing 50 workers. In the light of the unsuccessful meeting the consumer boycott was launched on 15 August. A mass rally was called by FOSATU on the 24 August, it was attended by 2 500 people who supported the boycott call and the reinstatement of the strikers.

In a compromise with community organisations who had supported the boycott call, after one month the call was extended to include an end to the State of Emergency, the release of all detainees and political prisoners, the unbanning of the ANC and the return of all exiles. In other words, from a campaign to secure the re-instatement of the Sarmcol strikers, it became a general political tool and spread to cover the whole of Natal. Inyande, the traders' organisation affiliated in Inkatha came out with a strongly worded statement against the boycott and threatened action if it was not called off.

At the end of 1985 Chief John Zuma of Impendle sent the strikers a cow which they could slaughter for their Christmas celebration. This was a sign of his support for the strikers and their struggle. On Christmas Day 1985, the 34th week of the strike, a Black Christmas demonstration was arranged. It was time to tell Sarmcol management that the struggle was not over. The strikers attended the Anglican Church service in Howick - the church of a number of senior Sarmcol management. After the service the strikers walked, in single file, the 20 kms back to Mpophomeni. However, just after

they reached the borders of the white section of Howick the police intervened and forced them onto buses which would take them back to Mpophomeni.

Dunlop workers had not forgotten the struggle of their fellow workers at Sarmcol. At the beginning of 1986 they approached Dunlop head office, requesting a meeting to discuss the Sarmcol dispute. The request was refused. The issue was then taken up by the individual factories but again management refused to meet. Workers responded by stopping work - they were protesting a breach of the recognition agreements. Management responded by issuing warnings. In response to these Dunlop workers went out on strikes that lasted over a week. Managements agreed to discuss the dispute and the strikes ended. Dunlop workers planned a national strike to protest Dunlop's refusal to take the issue up with BTR.

The campaigns around re-instatement of the Sarmcol strikers were concentrated in the period of 1985. During this period the Sarmcol workers undertook a number of innovative campaigns that relied on a wide support structure for their success. They managed to obtain this support by crossing the divide between workplace and community. Strong alliances were built between community organisations, in particular the youth and MAWU. At the end of 1985 SAWCO was established (see below) and in the following year most of the energy of the strikers went into SAWCO. However, this did not mean the workers gave up the campaign. International solidarity and the legal battle continued.

### 7.3 INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The international campaign around BTR Sarmcol was premised upon the fact that BTR was a multi-national company. Like all multi-nationals investing in South Africa it had been subjected to certain pressures. It had responded to these pressures by becoming signatorys of the European Economic Community (EEC) Code of Conduct for Multi-nationals operating in South Africa and the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multi-Nationals and Social Policy.

Many of the provisions of these two codes are similar (MAWU undated(d)). MAWU claimed that Sarmcol had breached numerous clauses of these agreements. The most flagrant breaches concerned employment practices, wages, industrial relations and migrant labour.

Firstly, the clauses relating to employment state that multi-nationals should endeavor to implement employment creating policies. MAWU claimed that Sarmcol, through rationalisation and retrenchment (see chapter 4) had done anything but that. Secondly, the EEC Code states that the minimum wage should exceed by at least 50 percent the minimum wage level. At the time of the strike only grade 6 and 7 were above both the Household Effective Level and the Supplemented Living Level (set for a family of 6). Thirdly, the codes state that

`companies should engage in collective bargaining with organisations which the workers are allowed to freely choose'. Sarmcol has a long history of anti-union behaviour. Finally, clauses relating to migrant labour condemn the system as an `instrument of apartheid policy' and state that employers should make it their concern to alleviate the effects of the system as much as possible through providing funding for housing, transport, leisure and health facilities and help with problems encountered through influx control, education etc. However, MAWU claims that Sarmcol far from challenging this system, continues to make use of it. Migrant workers are employed and housed in single sex hostels, and no efforts have been made to assist with housing, transport, education, relocation problems etc.

These allegations<sup>39</sup> and the firing of the strikers while on a legal strike were the central thrust of MAWU's international campaign against Sarmcol.

Soon after the strike began, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) launched a campaign against BTR. The ICFTU has affiliates in the U.S., Canada, Australia, India and 9 European countries. They accused BTR of allowing unfair labour

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39. While these allegations do not form a central argument of this thesis, no evidence has been uncovered which would challenge them.

practices and breaking the EEC code for multinational firms operating in South Africa. They announced that they would ask their affiliates to support their statement through strikes and other action (Natal Witness, 18 June 1985).

A number of Sarmcol shop stewards applied for passports so that they could visit the United Kingdom to campaign for support. However, their applications were turned down. MAWU officials represented them in the tour of the United Kingdom to enlist international support.

The union which represented workers at BTR in the United Kingdom approached BTR over the dismissal of workers in South Africa. The response was enlightening "the company did not wish to entertain 'gratuitous representations which were wasted and misguided'." (Daily News, 14 June 1985).

In response the British Trade Union Congress (TUC) decided to take up the matter with the Department of Trade and Industry. Pressure was also brought to bear by the International Metalworkers Federation who urged Margaret Thatcher to intervene in the dismissal.

Solidarity messages were sent to the strikers by British trade unions. The following message sent by the TUC was read at the Edendale mass meeting on 24 August 1985

"TUC and British trade unions with membership in BTR will maintain pressures on the parent

company until it agrees to negotiate a just settlement with MAWU. Pressing the British Government to recognise its responsibility to intervene with BTR to achieve a negotiated settlement. Sarmcol dispute will figure in the debate at our Congress in Blackpool.

(Telex from TUC to Schrellner, 23 August 1985)

MAWU also stated that they would take the issue to the European Court, as the company had broken the European Economic Community Code of Conduct of which it was a signatory<sup>40</sup>.

In September 1985 the Social Democratic Group of European Members of Parliament undertook to raise the issue of BTR Sarmcol in the European Parliament when resolutions on South African were debated. This was in connection with accusations by MAWU that BTR Sarmcol had broken the EEC Code of Conduct for companies in South Africa.

The Commissioners of the EEC were also requested to carry out hearings in Brussels over the allegations. In July 1986 it was agreed that the EEC would hold a public hearing of the alleged breaches. The Court decided in favour of the Sarmcol Workers.

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40. For Sarmcol's response to these allegations see European Rubber Journal, January 1986. MAWU responded to that article in MAWU, Update January 1986.

MAWU decided to present evidence to the United Nations Sub-Committee on Transnationals in South Africa. Sarmcol shop stewards were refused passports to attend the hearing so FOSATU representatives gave evidence on their behalf (see Public Hearings on the Activities of Transnational Corporations in South Africa and Namibia, 1985). In their evidence MAWU made the point that in fact all these codes are useless because none of them can actually be enforced. It must be accepted that multi-nationals are in South Africa to exploit the conditions. Thus a radically new approach was needed if these codes were to be effective (Public Hearings on the Activities of Transnational Corporations in South Africa and Namibia, 1985; Fanaroff, 1985).

In 1987 a tour of the Sarmcol play - The Long March - to England was arranged. The tour was very successful, not only in raising public awareness for the issue, but in generating funds for SAWCO.

The international campaign has helped to focus attention on the operation of multi-nationals in South Africa and in particular BTR Sarmcol. It has also been instrumental in obtaining much of the finance needed to launch SAWCO and maintain a subsistence level for the strikers. Particularly in the last year, it has built up a momentum of its own in Britain attracting more grass-roots support (report-back by G. Schreiner to general meeting 02/12/87). However, it has not been able to pressure Sarmcol to reinstate the strikers or even to negotiate with them. The EEC hearing was in

However, the most serious and violent attack came on the night of December 5 1986. There had been rumours that Inkatha was planning to hold a fair in Mpophomeni on Saturday 6th. However, busloads of Inkatha supporters began arriving at Mpophomeni on the Friday evening, collecting at the Community Hall. They had supposedly arrived earlier to secure the hall from attacks by the Mpophomeni Youth. Other strange events happened in the early parts of that evening - the township manager was seen driving around as were other strange cars, all the lights in the township went out and the youth of Mpophomeni remembered the rumours of an attack that had been circulating in the last days of the court case. The Youth decided to keep watch and see what was happening. They stopped the car of Phineas Sibiya (senior shop steward, Chairperson of SAWCO and the shop stewards council) and told him what they had observed. Phineas then went to collect Simon Ngubane (shop steward and actor in The Long March) and went to park outside the house of his half-brother Mike Sibiya<sup>41</sup>. Mike came out and they sat in the car discussing what was happening. Flomin Minikathi, daughter of a striker and a member of the SAWCO Health Committee was also with them.

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41. Mike's house is to be found diagonally opposite the Community Hall.

Finally, the police arrived. They arrested a number of Mpophomeni residents and escorted Inkatha supporters out of the township.<sup>43</sup>.

During November 1985 it had been announced that BTR Sarmcol and the Inkatha backed United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA) had signed a recognition agreement. The residents of Mpophomeni had paid the highest price for their continued support of the Sarmcol strikers.

The funeral was subjected to severe restrictions and thousands of mourners were turned back. And now a year later there has still been no justice. This attack on their leadership has dramatically changed the strikers' perceptions of Inkatha. No longer is it an organisation 'out there' which can't do anything for them. It is now the enemy responsible for the murder of Phineas, Simon, Flomin and Alpheaus.

"When I talk like this, I feel and wish like I could be in a place where Inkatha is dominant, even if it's packed in many houses. Inkatha people are so rude. They even have the guts of coming to your own house<sup>44</sup> and do

43. These events are compiled from conversations with shop stewards after the attack and from affidavids.

44. Traditionally the homestead is a very respectable place. An outsider must not just do anyhow but must be humble and show respect. With the increase in violence and attacks, a home has lost its status and hence security. A person running away from

whatever they like. If they chase after me where will I go to if not to my house. My young boy always say, we will only leave our house when we are dead, removed by an undertaker. As long as we are not buried we will stay here and defend our home. Because when they come, you hear them chanting Ihayi! Ihayi!, and then you know that the thugs are here. Therefore my brothers it is important then even where you live you must talk to people, organise them."

(extract from Baba Zondi's speeches)

The relationship between the strikers, traditional leaders and Inkatha had turned the full circle. The question that needs to be answered is how this happened? At the beginning of the strike and even before there was full support for the community and its struggles. Now in the dark of the night they had declared themselves enemies and attacked and killed.

## 7.6 SAWCO

By August 1985 MAWU and the strikers realised that the

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enemies would run straight home, where security is guaranteed. But now that is no longer possible.

Sarmcol struggle was going to be long and protracted. The strikers could not continue to survive on the support committee's fund raising efforts. And so the idea of a workers' co-operative was first raised. Seminars were held towards the end of 1985 where the subject was discussed.

Questions such as wages, membership and the relationship to MAWU, the rest of the community and the strikers had to be resolved. Initially pilot projects such as candle-making, 'T'-shirts, vegetable growing, poultry and brick-making were investigated. With a commitment from the about to be launched federation the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to buy 't'-shirts, as well as a commission for the launch, SAWCO was launched in November 1985.

SAWCO has concrete links to organised workers. It is seen as a project of MAWU and now the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) where there were two members on the MAWU Southern Natal Branch Executive Committee and was thus represented on the National Executive Committee. Through NUMSA's affiliation to COSATU, SAWCO is linked to COSATU. This direct link to union structures is what makes SAWCO different from all other co-operatives (Anon, 1987a; Green, 1986a; SAWCO, undated).

The controlling body of SAWCO is the Central Executive Committee (CEC). This has area representatives from each of the 15 areas from which the strikers come, as well as representatives from each of the projects.

Members of the community who are not strikers can join SAWCO as associate members. Strikers who work in the co-operatives receive an allowance for each day worked, lunch is provided, as well as transport costs.

At present SAWCO has five projects - 'T'-shirt and button making, agriculture, health, culture and bulk-buying. The Health Project is the oldest, having its roots in the clinic set up behind the Community Hall in the first days of the strike. Initially the project was primarily concerned with the health of the children. During 1986 Health Screenings were conducted for the children of the strikers. Those children who were found to be malnourished were given extra food. Follow-ups were done to check the progress of the children. However, the strikers and the adult members of their families were also facing problems. At Sarmcol they had been on medical aid schemes. Now they had nothing. Many of the strikers were suffering from illnesses that required constant medical attention - tuberculosis, high blood pressure, asthma, heart problems, diabetes etc. And they could not afford either to see doctors or pay for the required treatment. Towards the end of 1986 the Adult Health Screenings were launched.

The screening programmes are run with the assistance of doctors from the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA), but all the planning, organising and follow-up work is done by the Health Committee. This Committee is drawn from the strikers, their wives

and children and assisted by a trained nurse from the Industrial Health Unit<sup>45</sup>.

Bulk-buying also has its roots in pre-SAWCO days when buying for the food-parcels was undertaken by the Pietermaritzburg Support Committee. Slowly this job was taken over by the shop stewards themselves and then SAWCO. This venture is primarily concerned with the buying of food for the weekly food parcel.

Consultation with the strikers over the contents of the food parcel takes place at the weekly general meeting. There were ambitious plans to extend bulk-buying to the rest of the community. This would have been done by buying goods cheaply which could then be sold to non-strikers. However, these plans have not materialised. At present the discussion concerns links between agriculture, health and bulk-buying with bulk-buying being used to distribute agricultural products to malnourished families identified by the Health Project.

At present two projects fall under the Culture Group - the Sarmcol Play The Long March and a Gum-boot Dance Group. The play was workshopped by a group of strikers and members of the Durban Workers' Cultural Local in November 1985. Its first performance was at the Dunlop Workers' victory party in November. Since then not only have they toured South Africa but also England and

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45. Based at the University of Natal, Durban.

like job rotation, have been abandoned in the interests of productivity.

SAWCO is without doubt a unique project. It raises vital questions concerning worker-controlled production in a future South Africa as well as other issues relating to unemployment and community relationships. However, for SAWCO to be a success the economic questions are as important as the political ones. Especially in the light of the Sarmcol judgment, SAWCO is the only thing which stands between the strikers and long-term starvation.

SAWCO has to become a financial success. It cannot run on financial aid for much longer. And this is the challenge which must be faced. They have to compete, on an equal basis, with capitalist-run production and agriculture, make a profit and hold onto their political principles.

## 7.7 CONCLUSION

After two years on strike the strikers are still clear why they went on strike,

"I voted because I wanted my rights at work. So I was fighting also to get my service pay when retrenched or out of Sarmcol as to my children this is all my power, this is where I got so much, from where I work. Because

it's somehow an insult to me. Other factories they do come, where we live, they do come with some money after being retrenched. My wife will say to me that I have misused money while I was in town, it means I was involved with other wives. So it makes division now in the family. I don't want to come to the point where my children will insult me or kick me out saying, 'you've been working at Sarmcol and what have you gained at that time having 3 legs'. That's why I have to fight while I'm still alive for my power."

(Interview, Godfrey Labazane).

In many ways the Sarmcol strike is unique. In fact it is more than a strike it is a battle which affects an entire community. To cite Zondi

As you all know our slogan "forward with the workers' struggle" is very meaningful to us. We coined this slogan long before we really knew what it meant to be in the struggle. We used to shout this slogan not knowing what it meant to be in the struggle. Today we know what it is like to struggle. Now we are in a position to tell others what it is like to be in the struggle.

Brothers, when we say "amandla", it displays our ultimate commitment to our struggle. When we shout "amandla" it's like we remind ourselves of the agreement we made, that we

will stick together in our struggle till the end, no matter what happens in the process."

And in the process many things have happened. They undertook a number of campaigns which were unique in South African labour history. During these campaigns they built bridges with political and community organisations. At times these links were fraught with tensions but the strikers managed to maintain the support of the youth and along with that their leadership of the campaigns.

The relationship between Inkatha, the chiefs and the strikers also changed dramatically in the years of the strike. Prior to the strike the Inkatha supporting Community Council supported the community's grievances over bus fare and rent hikes in opposition to Ulundi. At the beginning of the strike they received support from chiefs in the area and Chief Zuma of Impendle sent them a cow to slaughter for Christmas. The first hint of potential conflict appeared at the time of the Consumer Boycott. Then the UWUSA went to organise the scabs at Sarmcol. And, finally, in December 1986, Inkatha leaders participated in an attack on Mpophomeni.

Through most of this period the strikers kept their sight fixed on the court-case. They believed strongly in the impartial, neutral Court which would realise the justness of their grievance and hence find in their favour. The loss of the case has thus been a great shock to them.

Finally, the strike has been responsible for the birth of SAWCO a fledgling of worker controlled production trying to survive in a capitalist economy. It could be argued that the political success of SAWCO would be a judge of the consciousness of the Sarmcol workers. However, I would argue against this interpretation. Such an evaluation would be against everything for which this thesis argues (see chapter 1). The option of SAWCO must be seen against the other options of the strikers as well as their belief in 'fairness and justice'. In other words they have always believed that they would go back to Sarmcol. And so for the majority of strikers SAWCO was not a serious option but rather a stop-gap. And now,

Sarmcol must die. If they don't want to take us back they must pay all and leave. All our life is taken with Sarmcol now we are old and can't do anything."

(Interview, K.P. Gwala)

In the introduction to this chapter it was argued that the strike would have crumbled a long time ago if it had not been for the consciousness of the Sarmcol strikers. At various points in the preceding chapters I have hinted at the particular consciousness of the strikers. The next chapter deals exclusively with this subject.



## CHAPTER 8    PRESENT CONSCIOUSNESS AND PAST INFLUENCES

### 8.1    INTRODUCTION

As stated in chapter 1 the major focus of this thesis is an examination of the process by which class consciousness is formed in black worker communities<sup>46</sup>. It argued against a simplistic definition of class consciousness as true or false. It is necessary not only to understand the process by which that consciousness was formed, but also to conceptualise consciousness as something dynamic and changing, depending upon the concrete conditions.

In attempting to theorise this process, five areas for examination were identified. Firstly, there are the

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46. See Bozzoli, 1987 pp 4-8 for a discussion of the term 'community'. Community, in this context, is used to refer to a group of people who, through struggle, have a common interest. This common interest is forged by the members of this group themselves.

structural forces which broadly define our world. These are the giant cogs of economy, polity and ideology. But we are not empty slates upon which unseen hands write our consciousness. Through human agency men and women actively intervene in these historical processes. This intervention can be at a number of levels. However, where communities are aware that they are challenging structural forces, consciousness develops. Often the decision to intervene is taken on the basis of past experiences. This leads us to the third concept - that of experience. Experiences accumulate into a store of 'public knowledge' (Sitas, 1985). Past experiences and the traditions which they have maintained and evoked are vital in the development of consciousness in a community. In many cases traditions - whether invented or real have a non-class base. However, even if these traditions have a non-class origin their invention does not escape class determination. Finally, welding all this together are the grassroots intellectuals - utilising traditions, providing common meanings and interpretations of past experiences and forging people into communities with a common consciousness.

Previous chapters have examined the world as experienced by the Sarmcol workers from 1940 to 1987. Labour tenancy, the lives of the older workers, the struggles of the 1950's, the importance of the imbongi, and the push to get MAWU inside the factory have been discussed. Experiences don't happen in a vacuum of intellectual thought. They are interpreted, debated and utilised as part of the process by which class

consciousness is formed. It has been argued above that these experiences have shaped the particular consciousness of these workers. An important precondition and part of this consciousness was the moulding of one history for all Sarmcol workers.

There have been a number of influences which have been important in the development of consciousness. Firstly, there was a common experience of land alienation and labour tenancy. Secondly, for many of the workers, within their extended families, there is a tradition of working at Sarmcol. Their fathers or brothers came home with the stories of struggle. These stories were not only recounted but their relevance, the workers' interpretations and values were also passed on. Thirdly, there was the return of Harry Gwala in the early 1970's. He came back to Sarmcol, and recalled to the fore of their memories the old days of struggle. He also brought them messages of worker organisation and unity. When MAWU appeared soon after, it seemed to the workers as if the two merged in their memories. Fourthly, many of the younger union members were recruited into MAWU by old workers who had been unionised in the 1950's. The MAWU was a new organisation but workers who had experiences of past trade union organisation, in particular Zondi, helped and used those experiences in the ongoing process of organising for a new era. Thus, in the organising process lessons from the past were utilised. Fifthly, there is the experience of the strike. Finally, there is the important role played by the imbongi. Zondi is but one example of a tradition which exists in the oral

world. Somebody like him would be important in any such environment. He is a broker of the past and a controller of symbolic capital. He educates the workers about past struggle and at the same time offers interpretations of how the past can affect the present. The final point is that these experiences which Zondi recalls are ratified by the majority of the Sarmcol workers. They agree that he is also talking about their lives. This enhances his stature and lends weight to his words. From these common perceptions, a consciousness was formed. This process, it is argued, answers a broader theoretical question: ordinary people do shape their consciousness despite the dominant structures and ideology.

The question that remains is "How does this happen?" In this chapter it is intended to make more explicit the links between the process of consciousness formation, the role of grassroots intellectuals and the experiences of the Sarmcol workers. While it is necessary, for the sake of clarity, to tease out the different strands separately this should not be interpreted to mean that they can be seen in isolation from each other.

## **8.2 GRASSROOTS INTELLECTUALS AND TRADITION**

The grassroots intellectuals of a community play a unifying role. They are the ones who draw together the

experiences, explaining and giving them meaning. As stated above, their role takes on new dimensions in communities where there are low levels of literacy and formal education.

It is argued that there are two kinds of grassroots intellectuals in a community - the traditional<sup>47</sup> and the organisational. Sometimes, as in the case of the Sarmcol workers, the two overlap<sup>48</sup>.

Zondi is the imbongi of the Sarmcol workers and as such would be classified as a traditional grassroots intellectual. His status as imbongi is conferred on him by the community. This is in contradiction to tradition where imbongi's were praise-poets of important people; chiefs and kings, and as such were appointed by these people as their personal praisers. The role of the imbongi is to recite 'izibongo' or praises. Izibongo is the plural of 'isibongo' which means 'praise' or surname (Cope, 1968). However, they

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47. The term 'Traditional intellectuals' is not used here in the same sense as Gramsci utilises it. Rather, it is used in the sense of 'cultural traditions and customs'.

48. For organisation to be successful there needs to be an overlap. Once the traditional intellectuals come into an organisation the mass usually follow.

were not only 'praise-poets' they were also social commentators, advisors and criticisers. It is also important to distinguish between the 'izibongo' and the 'inkondlo'. 'Inkondlo' is more 'straight poetry' not concerned with praising.

As imbongi Zondi does a number of things. Firstly, if we examine the literary traditions of his orations we find that he does not only confine himself to izibongo or izikondlo but also draws on the tradition of 'izinganekwane' (folk-tales). These have certain poetic qualities such as repetitions but they fall into the category of prose rather than poetry. Thus he utilises a mixture of the simplicity and prose of the izinganekwane with the method of delivery, parallelism, chanting, imagery, repetition and personification of the izibongo; and the alliteration, assonance (vowel harmony) and stanza development of the inkondlo<sup>49</sup>. It is this form that is borrowed from the cultural past and not the content. The content itself draws on the concrete traditions and experience of the Sarmcol

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49. Unfortunately many of these distinctions have been lost in the translations below. The reference for this is Cope (1968), although many of the ideas emerged in discussion with Mi Hlatshwayo.

workers - that of struggle at Sarmcol, zulu culture<sup>50</sup> and history, and, christianity - to provide lessons and inspiration for the present political situation. Each is mediated with the other to produce a rich vibrant prose.

"Our struggle cannot wait for those who are late, but it continues with those who are present. Our slogan 'Forward with the workers struggle' is like a river flowing down, where all those who are thirsty will drink this water. The one who drinks this water gets transformed and knows about uprightness. The river is still open for workers to talk about things in connection with their struggle, so that they can resolve the problems and deal with obstacles on the way. Even if we haven't been able to remove obstacles in one struggle, but the struggle still ...? (Workers' response -

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50. 'Zulu culture' is a term used throughout this thesis, but in this chapter especially. This thesis concerns itself specifically with the Lions River area hence the categorisation 'zulu culture'. However many of the activities grouped under this concept could just as easily be found in the eastern or northern Transvaal, Zimbabwe or Mozambique i.e. they should not be seen as exclusive to the ethnic group 'zulu'.

`continues'). Except for the ones who go out of the way and say I'm going to the way of `Ntalantishi' (oblivion). There was one brother who was told to go to Nineveh, and instead took a different route. He was afraid that he might be attacked for what he was to say, and then decided to take a ship to a different place. As we are here there are those brothers who are just waiting to hear when we will get our money, whether it is a lump sum or in bits and pieces. Right now we are waiting for our lawyer to sort out the payment of our money with the company and then take their own way. Let me find out from you what makes you think we are going to get our money in a packet? ...(pause)... Because we are building here. In others we are building with wider and broader sticks (ntingo). In others we are building with thinner and smaller sticks (ntingo). ..."

(Zondi, General Meeting.)

As can be seen Zondi uses imagery, phraseology and concepts peculiar to zulu culture. He also draws on zulu history. However, as argued, this is fused with other influences. At times his style of oration is reminiscent of the ethiopian preacher. While his style is a mixture of the traditional imbongi and the lay preacher, the content utilises a wide range of subjects. It might, at times, be centered in the struggles of the Sarmcol workers or their common ancestors, but at no time is it narrowly ethnic.

"My brothers, let's all be united, whether you are rich or poor, educated or uneducated. Hold hands together with other people, not only your nation, but also people of other races who identify with our cause. Be part of the community, so that you can be of use to the community. If you comes across a hungry person in the street give that person 5c so that s/he can eat. Let me not continue; you have people who really are izi-mfabanga<sup>51</sup>. And the i-mfabanga who don't know where their next meal will come from and others who are kept in the houses of those who control this soil. Because the whites always say 'you are teaching them to talk, talk, talk'. And 'the grass that is flat you are wanting it to stand up.' And they take those people and keep them - those are the izi-mfabanga. Those people who did they die for ... (Workers' response: 'us'). When they come out and if you encounter them in the street, you got money but you just keep quiet even though this person died for you. Brothers let us try and get our house in order. ..."

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51. This is a negative term used for a person who is so poor that they can't help him or herself, so poor that one doesn't know where the sickness come from. They are totally dependent on other people.

(Zondi, General Meeting)

This has resulted in a consciousness which sees itself as zulu but is national in the final analysis. Zondi has left no room for narrow ethnicity. In other words the workers see themselves as zulu in an historical and cultural sense. Historically, they are linked to the zulu nation formed by Shaka. They speak the zulu language and they follow zulu traditions and cultural practices. However, they do not see themselves as part of the zulu nation as defined by Inkatha, Buthelezi or the State.

While this sense of "zuluness" is something articulated by Zondi his role is but one strand - there are also the experiences of SACTU and the ANC (see chapter 5) which have mediated in the development of this consciousness as well as the very real experiences of the workers at the hands of Inkatha.

Linked to the traditional grassroots intellectual is the question of tradition. The fact that Zondi is an imbongi - in itself a traditional role illustrates this. However, he also utilises traditional concepts to explain present struggle.

As we start our meeting today, we are moving towards the end of the year. Another year of suffering and hardships. But when you just look at us physically, we do not look like people in severe hardship. As we start our meeting today we are happy and thankful to be

with this young man 'Zinyawozikhethamabala',<sup>52</sup>  
 . Ehe! This young man was with us here,  
 struggled with us, suffered with us. When we  
 went to arm ourselves at the field of  
 suffering, he went to arm himself at the  
ukusoka<sup>53</sup> a college overseas. Those who  
 speak say Jesus went to ... (response  
 inaudible). But is that true? (Workers'  
 response: 'no'). We understand that he went  
 to arm himself. We do not know when he comes  
 out from overseas what he is going to say he  
 is. Jeff had gone to acquire more 'weapons',  
 and now since he is back we don't know what  
 name to give him. Because we are going to  
 give him a new name now. Because, whenever I  
 do these things<sup>54</sup> people laugh at me, I see

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52. He is referring to Jeff Schreiner who was paying  
 his first visit to the strikers after his return  
 from Europe. The name means selective feet;  
 somebody who is very careful and methodical about  
 what s/he does.

53. Ukusoka is a Xhosa tradition of initiating young  
 boys into adulthood/manhood. They stay in the  
 mountains for weeks where they are trained in the  
 responsibilities and duties of adulthood.

54. This jumping up and down is a traditional way of  
 expressing joy at something. It is called ukugiya.

things have changed. We don't know what he is going to say. Because things change, and we are also changing. Jeff deserves a new name<sup>55</sup>."

(Zondi, General Meeting)

But this use of traditional concepts is not limited to Zondi. The workers themselves in responding to and discussing events also rely on "deep zulu"

"May I ask if today you are a Magwaza and you communicate to your ancestors on a certain matter, would you also allow the Mkizes to be there at an exact place where you are communicating - would that happen? (no) Thank you that's all I ask."  
(Striker at General Meeting)

The second 'type' of grassroots intellectual defined was the organisational intellectual. These are the

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55. Every name has a history. And surnames change according to the historical deeds of the person and carrier of that name. Jeff was given his name in the situation of pre-strike Sarmcol. He has now to be renamed according to the fruits/deeds he can put forward in demand to the present level of the struggle.

shop stewards<sup>56</sup>. Their role as intellectuals is very different from that of Zondi's. They have emerged from new structures of struggle that do not have links to traditions. They are seen as knowledgeable about the 'ways of the material world'. They have proved themselves in struggle. Yet, in situations of divided opinion and conflict, the word of the imbongi would be more influential.

What is being stressed here is that, in the case of the Sarmcol workers (and I would hypothesise in most black working class communities), tradition plays a vital role in forming and understanding consciousness. And these traditions in and of themselves are not necessarily exclusively ethnic or conservative. They can and are being used in progressive movements and struggles.

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56. The other level of leadership in the community are the SAWCO officials and executive members. However I would argue that a distinction must be drawn between leadership and intellectuals. Organic intellectuals are nominated and accepted by the community as such, they do not proclaim themselves. Part of this acceptance by the community has to do with the experience of leadership i.e. they have to prove themselves in 'battle'. It is argued that SAWCO is too new for its leadership to have proved itself.

### 8.3 LOSS OF THE LAND

Chapter 3 shows that for the majority of Sarmcol workers proletarianisation and the loss of direct access to land are events that are not far removed from their direct experience. Many of the older men among the workers were themselves labour tenants on white farms, while the younger men either left the farms as children or heard about the experiences from their families. However, either way, the Sarmcol workers have directly experienced being alienated from land that belonged to them and their ancestors.

The experience of labour tenancy and dispossession occurred at the level of the individual. It was not a collective experience of the workers as was working at Sarmcol. Firstly, most farms had between five and twenty families living on them. And not all these people came to work at Sarmcol. Despite this isolation the structural conditions of the time do make this experience common to most of the workers. The legislation that was passed, the economic conditions and the role of organised agriculture meant that all labour tenants went through similar experiences e.g. restriction on cattle, pass-books, end of 6th month system, brutality and finally the abolition of labour tenancy. Thus, by the time the present workers came to work at Sarmcol, structural forces had resulted in

similar individual experiences. Thus the potential to utilise these experiences in unifying the workforce was there.

Secondly, labour tenants were not passive recipients of structural conditions. Resistance and struggle did take place but it happened in isolation. The response of the Natal Agricultural Union to the abolition of labour tenancy in the late 1960's shows that they did have some degree of success. But these struggles were largely as a response to a concrete situation. There was no sense of organisation and being able actively to change structural conditions through united action. In other words the intervention (human agency) by the labour tenants was reactive, challenging structural forces without an alternative vision.

It has been argued that the lives of the labour tenants were individual experiences. In trying to understand what makes these experiences part of present struggles and consciousness we need to understand the role of the grassroots intellectuals and tradition.

For these workers their personal experience of alienation from the land is seen as part of this overall process of land-theft that began with the arrival of the whites (see below) and continues in their present struggle against Sarmcol. Oral traditions and stories tell them that this land has historically been stolen from them:

"Because you see Europeans they got a jealous, selfish they want this land.

Nxamalala was here, here at Howick say Mashingeni, all this place was Nxamalala. Now they take him to Impendle, that place got stones, 'cause they want to take that Cedara. ... They moved from here. Give him a big place at Impendle, but at Impendle got stones. Not same like this place. Nxamalala had all this land but they pushed the chief to Impendle. ... (It was) a long time. I was not born. I heard that they still got Nxamalala here. Nobody can take the place for another man."

(Interview, Simeon Mhlongo).

However, consciousness is not the sum of mass experiences. To argue that consciousness developed out of these similar mass experiences would be to romanticise the role of experience. It is argued that these workers arrived at Sarmcol with similar experiences shaped by the structural forces of the time. Oral tradition told them that the land had been stolen from their ancestors by the 'Europeans' and now they themselves had experienced the final alienation from this land. Upon entering Sarmcol exploitation and struggle continued.

As argued above the role of the grassroots intellectuals is also important. Zondi, as imbongi, draws on biblical writings to give courage to the workers in their present predicament. And the stories which give the most inspiration are those of the Israelites returning to their lost land.

"My brothers you all know that we are also people who are guided by the Lord's words. The bible says when the Israelites left Egypt they were promised the land of honey and milk, where they would be in a land of perpetual happiness. We have always heard this story when priests tell us about it in the church. We had never thought that something similar to the experiences of the Israelites will happen to us. When the time came for the children of Israel to leave the bondage of Egypt, it was only then that paradoxically their problems and hardships began. Similarly, we really started experiencing severe hardships when we left Sarmcol. It was on the day we left Sarmcol that it became a reality to be without pay. We in fact decided on that day that we are going to leave Sarmcol premises without collecting our pay. Some of our brothers in the factory jumped and came to me and asked 'Bhuti Zondi, are we going to go home without our pay this time?' Even some of my sons at Mechanical, also jumped, and asked if we leave without our pay how are we going to get home? My brothers, we are in a war here. All the time you knew that we will have to fight at some stage. In a war situation, you don't choose when to fight and under what conditions. Where are we here? (Workers' response: 'In a war')."

(Zondi, General Meeting).

To these workers the struggle has never stopped. When they talk about the Sarmcol struggle and why they went on strike, the explanation goes further back than 1985. The historical roots are traced back to the loss of land. The final resolution of the struggle is not only in getting their jobs back at Sarmcol but also regaining their lost land.

"Why did I go on strike at Sarmcol? We had our struggle at Sarmcol, but our struggle did not start with the Sarmcol, it started when we lost our land to the Europeans in the time of our forefathers."

(Zondi, General Meeting).

Ironically, it is through SAWCO that once more the workers have access to land.

#### **8.4 UNIONISATION IN THE 1950'S**

Chapter 5 recounts the experiences of unionisation in the 1950's. During this period Sarmcol workers belonged to two unions - Howick Rubber Workers' Union and the Rubber and Cable Workers' Union. The former was an affiliate of the SAT&LC, later affiliating to SACTU, while the latter was solely a SACTU affiliate. However, both unions have a common thread - they were organised by Harry Gwala.

SACTU's legacy remains in popular memory. With the formation of SACTU the Sarmcol workers were linked to

broader national demands and struggles. Yet they did not lose sight of issues which affected them directly. On the one hand they participated in the national stay-aways of the late 1950's, boycotted potatoes and burnt their passes. On the other, they continued to build their organisation and win demands inside the factory. In many cases the workers linked the broader demands of SACTU to their own workplace issues. For example, not only did they stay-away from work to demand £1 a day but they also demanded that the company provide firewood for the hostel inmates.

Workers who were on the farms during the 1950's also heard about organisation at Sarmcol. This could have been through the direct experience of working at Sarmcol, or else indirectly through fathers, brothers, neighbours or gossip and rumour. They heard how, through organisation and striking, the Sarmcol workers managed to win £1 a day, and they also heard about the potato boycott and other campaigns. The Natal Midlands therefore witnessed the merging of broader political campaigns with local worker issues.

This legacy affected MAWU's organisational drive in two ways. On the one hand, some people were more receptive to MAWU (they remembered the achievements of a union), while on the other hand, workers were scared to be involved. But ultimately the experience of SACTU illustrated to workers that life in the factory was easier when they had an organisation to protect them. They could improve conditions and were not as vulnerable to management's arbitrary discipline.

Organisation under SACTU also gave the workers a national perspective of the struggle. They did not regard themselves as one small factory, but saw themselves as part of a national movement. The leaders of the 1950's were people they knew. They are regarded as comrades in struggle.

What is being argued here is that there is a process of continuity between past experiences of struggle and present. The working class has a history, whether it is their personal history or the history of the generation before them.

The experience of BTR Sarmcol itself affected the issue of organisation and unionisation. As argued above Sarmcol was not the idyllic employer - far from it. Working conditions were always difficult and harsh. However, through organisation the workers had won some gains. When the state clamped down in the early 1960's, Sarmcol management utilised the opportunity to push back the frontier of control. Organisation was something the workers remembered during the hard times of the 1960's when Sarmcol pushed back the frontier of struggle, and the work process inside the factory became harsher and more regimented. The stories of Gwala's union were not forgotten - new workers learnt about those times from their fathers and brothers, but also from the imbongi of Sarmcol, Lawrence Zondi. Gwala left behind one important message to the workers he had organised - the importance of unity. Only by uniting and standing together could workers achieve

their demands - this was also the message that the new workers learnt. However, the success of MAWU's organisation drive can not be attributed to continuity alone (see below).

### **8.5 THE ROLE OF THE METAL AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION**

The final important element which needs to be examined is the role of MAWU and the strike. In many cases the events and experiences associated with MAWU and the strike reinforced earlier experiences. However, there is one exception - the concept of socialism.

As has been argued, there is a continuity between the earlier period of unionisation under SACTU and unionisation under MAWU. To many of the older workers the union is the union. It is more difficult to argue the issue of continuity between political philosophy and consciousness. Gwala, himself, was a member of the Communist Party and totally committed to organising the working class. And as has already been pointed out Howick was a SACTU organised area rather than an ANC area. The possible corollary to these points is that the experience of SACTU did give the workers a consciousness of themselves as members of the working class. However, this must be mediated by the national campaigns of the ANC and the disorganisation and repression of the 1960's.

MAWU organised workers on the basis of accountability, shop floor democracy and shop floor structures. These principles in themselves advanced the idea of worker leadership. However, for these workers, it was not only worker leadership in the factory, it was worker leadership of the struggle. At the same time, they were organising in an anti-union multi-national company. What began as a struggle for a recognition agreement has ended in a campaign which calls for "BTR (to) get out". These experiences reinforced the ideology of earlier organisation. It would be problematic to categorise this consciousness as socialist without examining it further. The experiences of working class life have resulted in an unshakable class solidarity.

"If it happens that you are able to build a brick house like this one, and you have some relationships with whites, people will say you are what? (Workers' response: 'a sell-out'). Truly speaking where do you get the money to build a better house when we are all equally poor? Where do you get the money from? There is no problem in building such a house if you are with the workers, part of the community. But when you build such a house, and you just watch us with your hands in the pockets, carrying a pen, what are we going to say to you? (Workers' response: 'you are a sell-out'). If you build a good house and you are with the workers we know that you are not a sell out. Or if you just drive past in your car, without giving a hand

to us who live in mud houses, just because you are a 'gentleman',<sup>57</sup>, we will call you a sell-out ..."

(Zondi, General Meeting.)

This class solidarity has been confirmed by actions of working class solidarity that have occurred throughout the period of the strike. I would argue that even though these workers experienced the oppression of apartheid as have all other black people, for them, as part of the working class, this oppression is enhanced. And the oppression and suffering that they have endured is so great that a settlement satisfactory to other classes, but which does not suit their needs, will not be sufficient.

"Bakwethu<sup>58</sup>, we are in the struggle here. In the struggle you do not eat, but what do you eat? (Workers' response: 'Hardship and suffering'). But that same suffering we eat makes us stronger and more dedicated to our cause. We are going to continue doing our thing in the struggle. Whose thing is this? (Workers' response: 'It is ours'). You see,

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57. This word symbolises the black educated elite.

58. Literally the word means 'you people of my stock'. It is an address used for people from the same group/community.

when we tie our hands together like this, we are signalling to everybody, the rich, the whites, and even the 'englishmen'<sup>59</sup>. If he could come here he would be stunned and ask 'what is happening now?' Because if we are moving hands like this, tight like this, what we are moving is very tight/hard (i.e. the struggle is heavy). We want to get our hands in that brick (the struggle) with our hands, barehanded as we are. No matter how difficult it is dismantle these bricks with our hands, we will do it, so that we ultimately have a voice and a say. Because if we don't hold our hands together and dismantle these bricks, we will never have a voice and a say. We want to change this brick. I am now sure. Dark or blue we will demolish this structure, no matter how

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59. 'Englishmen' in zulu discourse, and used in the present context, refers to the educated african people, particularly those who have raised themselves above the community by virtue of the fact that they 'speak english' (i.e. they are educated). This is because the major criterion of identifying the african educated elite is by their frequent use of the english language - hence the description 'englishmen'.

powerful it is. Come my child do it.

Amandla! (Workers' response: Ngawethu!).

(Zondi, General Meeting.)

It is argued that socialism cannot be defined in its traditional Western way, and on the basis of that definition a decision made about the consciousness of the Sarmcol workers. The Sarmcol workers have a clear grasp of issues of class separated from those of race. They also know where their struggle is going to end. While the exact nature and details of a socialist world may not have been conceptualised by the mass of workers, I would argue that that does not preclude them from having a socialist consciousness.

Mpophomeni itself is a working class community. Many of the residents work at Sarmcol and a further large percentage are unemployed. During the 1980's struggles had taken place in the community. These struggles had served to build a united community. The workers could then call on this unity for support during their struggle. Not only did the workers call on Mpophomeni for support they also called on the wider community of Pietermaritzburg. One sector which responded with both sympathy and affirmative action was the youth. This built up an unique alliance between the youth and the workers. In Mpophomeni the youth representatives freely attend the strikers meetings and vice versa. During the time of the school boycotts, workers mediated with education authorities. There a a clear situation where the youth and the workers are in the struggle together. However, it is in the fight against Inkatha that the youth have taken the lead.

"Our children today, just jump in front of us. ... One day when I was here at Mpophomeni and I phoned home where the kids told me that the roads are bad I shouldn't come home until after a week. The following week I was told by the kids that if I go home I must not use the normal route. When I arrived home I heard people saying 'Is this Zondi?' And then they would quickly go back into their houses, and come out again and back again. They were doing all this because they knew that when dusk fell, things were going to happen. When it finally became dark, my young girl came to the dining room where we were sitting with her mother. Initially she was walking up and down, and later she offered us a cup of tea and just sit down and relax here. As she was giving us tea, I could hear faint sounds in the background Hayi! .... Hayi, hayi<sup>60</sup>. When I asked her what was going on she said to us 'Don't worry just relax and enjoy your cup of tea'. Well I didn't have to ask anymore I could read the situation for myself, it was the same people

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60. Literally hayi means 'no'. However it is a chant that is now associated with the toi-toi of the progressive youth.

(saying this very proudly - i.e. the youth).  
 By the time it was completely dark everybody  
 was sitting inside and now I could hear  
 things much more clearly 'Hayi! ... Hayi!  
 Hayi!'. If in your own neighbourhood you  
 hear more of this chanting, you can sit down  
 and relax, and enjoy your cup of tea.  
 Amandla! Amandla!"  
 (Zondi, General Meeting.)

The youth are distinct from the educated middle classes  
 that walk by with 'their hands in their pockets'. They  
 are the 'young lions' who have taken up weapons on  
 behalf of the workers<sup>61</sup>.

## 8.6 CONCLUSION

There are so many subtleties and nuances which interact

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61. This idea needs to be understood in the context of  
 the Pietermaritaburg situation. Inkatha's first  
 major attack was against Mpophomeni itself - a  
 symbol of worker resistance. However, the current  
 battle which began in mid-1987 also started with  
 Inkatha launching major attacks against COSATU  
 members and their families. This escalated into  
 general conflict, and eventually the youth formed  
 defense units to protect their communities.

in the process of consciousness formation. And consciousness itself is a crystal ball - refracting, reflecting and absorbing the complex mosaic of human experience, action and structural forces. Thus it has not been possible to unpack every thread. Only the important themes have been stressed in the above chapter.

These are the continuity between alienation from the land and struggle at Sarmcol. The importance of the experience of unionisation under SACTU in influencing decisions to join MAWU. A consciousness which sees itself as 'zulu' but has no hint of the narrow ethnicity of Inkatha. And finally the idea of a struggle, under the leadership of workers in strong alliance with the youth, but which does not lose site of either abolishing apartheid or attaining socialism.

Overall there is the importance of the grassroots intellectuals and in particular, Baba Zondi, in shaping the consciousness of the Sarmcol workers. To do this he has built on their concrete experiences - experiences shaped by the interaction between human agency and structural forces.

### CONCLUSION

On 13 December 1986 the striking Sarmcol workers were denied the right to freely bury their dead. Phineas Sibiya - chairperson of the Sarmcol shop stewards, regional MAWU worker leader and chairperson of SAWCO; Simon Ngubane - shop steward, cultural activist and performer in The Long March; and Flomin Mnikati - young Health Committee activist and daughter of a Sarmcol striker, were assassinated on the evening of 5 December. They had been abducted from Mpophomeni by Inkatha-led vigilantes, tortured in the community hall, taken to a deserted place near Lions River, and executed. Once this dastardly deed was over Inkatha led another attack on Mpophomeni. Another youth was killed, before the police escorted the grinning vigilantes out of Mpophomeni.

Now, in a morbid parody of the attack, caspirs surrounded the graveyard and the township enforcing strict rules and regulations on the funeral. The state was determined - they had died solitarily and they should be buried the same way.

Despite this brutal murder of some of the key figures in the Sarmcol struggle, the struggle continued. Having lost not abstract leaders but people with whom

they had shared the daily struggle of the strike and the worries and triumphs over starvation, the strikers, reflected on Zondi's words,

"Today we know what it is like to struggle. Now we are in a position to tell others what it is like to be in the struggle. Brothers, when we say 'amandle', it displays our ultimate commitment to our struggle. When we shout 'amandla' it's like we remind ourselves of the agreement we made, that we will stick together in our struggle till the end, no matter what happens in the process."

These words gave them the courage to hold together and battle on.

It is impossible to understand this solidarity in the face of so much adversity without understanding the history of the Sarmcol struggle and the consciousness which has resulted. This leads us to the central question of this thesis which is that of the process of consciousness formation. This raises the age old problematic of the divide between structure and agency. As a result of the hegemony of the structural marxists, questions of consciousness have been left off the agenda of western marxism. This trend has reflected itself in the writings of South African marxists. It was only in the 1980's through the work of the 'social historians' and the 'new labour studies group' that the "masses" were allowed to speak. However, it is argued that despite these new trends the question of consciousness formation has not yet been seriously examined.

Chapter 1 attempts to theorise this question. It argues that most of the studies which deal with the issue of class consciousness deal with the problem in a simplistic manner. Thus they are unable to move past a 'true'/false, 'revolutionary'/'factory' interpretation of consciousness where it is a commodity to be measured on the scale of revolution, and in all cases to be found wanting. This thesis argues that consciousness is an historical and social process, shaped by cultural formations both inside and outside factory life. There are a number of areas - structural forces, human agency, experience, tradition and grassroots intellectuals - which need to be examined in order to understand these formations and thus consciousness.

People are thrust together through structural forces. To a certain extent these structural forces affect our experiences. Thus, before it is possible to examine consciousness, one needs to examine the structural forces at hand. Secondly, there are the two concepts utilised so centrally by E.P. Thompson - human agency and experience. Through human agency men and women actively intervene in historical processes. Their intervention, maintains Anderson (1980), could be at a number of levels. However, where communities are aware that they are challenging structural forces consciousness develops. Through intervention experience develops, and often intervention is based on past experience. As Sitas (1985) argues, experience accumulates into a store of 'public knowledge' which is then used to debate and evaluate further intervention

and experiences. grassroots intellectuals provide a common meaning and interpretation of the experiences which a community has gone through. Not only do they participate in the creation of a mass consciousness but they also provide an alternative vision of society. If one is to attempt to understand how knowledge is passed on in an oral society the role of the grassroots intellectual is doubly important. Thus one needs to go beyond Gramsci to examine the grassroots symbols and traditions utilised by grassroots intellectuals in oral culture of resistance. Traditions can be both invented or genuine. A point which needs to be stressed is that in many cases the raw materials of these traditions have a non-class base. Despite these origins, their invention cannot escape a class determination. Thus it is argued that, if one wishes seriously to examine the question of the process of consciousness formation then all these aspects need to be examined seriously.

This thesis has categorised the experiences of the Sarmcol strikers - chapter 3 looked at the experience of labour tenancy and dispossession, chapter 4 examined working life at Sarmcol, chapter 5 investigated organisation during the 1950's, MAWU's thrust for recognition, community struggles and events leading up to the strike was outlined in chapter 6, while chapter 7 examined the events of the strike. The theoretical questions were hinted at during these five chapters, but it was chapter 8 which attempted to consolidate the links between the 'experiences' and the theoretical formulations. The main thrust of this chapter is that grassroots intellectuals serve vital functions in oral

worlds and that to understand how ordinary people shape their consciousness despite the dominant structure and ideology we have to understand the role of these grassroots intellectuals. Some of the important themes of this consciousness are articulated below.

The majority of Sarmcol strikers were either labour tenants or born into families of labour tenants. They have directly experienced the experiences associated with land alienation and dispossession. There was no organised resistance to this, neither did labour tenants passively accept. Some of them left the farms, while others looked for farms with no restrictions. However, this passive resistance or intervention had an effect on the Natal Agriculture Union, which then put pressure on the South African State not to implement the abolition of labour tenancy.

The Sarmcol workers are strongly aware of their oppression and exploitation. They are aware that the land around Howick used to belong to their chiefs, and that it is the home of their ancestors. Its expropriation is explained in terms of economics and race.

"the whites came here, they saw it was green and fertile and so they took our land and pushed us to Impendle, the place of hills and rocks."

This was the first in the line of removals which ended at Mpophomeni. The labour tenant who lost all access to land was forced to become an urban worker. It is also argued that these experiences formed the basis of

a common ground for unity between workers meeting each other for the first time at Sarmcol. They provided workers with a 'starting point' to their struggle.

This oppression has been further enhanced by the harshness of working life at Sarmcol. They have experienced the full brunt of both apartheid and capitalism. It is this experience of exploitation which has blunted the development of a purely national consciousness. This experience of working at Sarmcol was one that was to permeate all aspects of their lives from their experience of trade union organisation in the 1950's to the final decision to go on strike in 1985.

SACTU's legacy remained in popular memory. It affected MAWU's organisational drive in two ways. On the one hand, some people were more receptive to MAWU (they remembered the achievements of a union), while on the other hand, workers were scared to be involved. But ultimately the experience of SACTU illustrated to workers that life in the factory was easier when they had an organization to protect them. They could improve conditions and were not as vulnerable to management's arbitrary discipline. Organisation under SACTU also gave them a national perspective. They did not regard themselves as one small factory, but saw themselves as part of a national movement. The leaders of the 1950's were people they knew. They are regarded as comrades in struggle.

The Sarmcol workers are dependent on the oral transmission of knowledge. The imbongi is central to

this process. Zondi uses imagery, phraseology and concepts peculiar to zulu culture. He also draws on zulu history. However, this is fused with other influences. At times his style of oration is reminiscent of the Ethiopian preacher. While his style is a mixture of the traditional imbongi and the lay preacher, the content utilizes a wide range of subjects. It might, at times, be centered in the struggles of the Sarmcol workers or their common ancestors, but at no time is it narrowly ethnic. This has resulted in a consciousness which sees itself as zulu but is also national in the final analysis. He has left no room for narrow ethnicity. Their freedom is linked to the freedom of all workers and oppressed people in South Africa.

Despite the evidence of continuity in struggle MAWU and now NUMSA is their organisation and will represent their interests as workers, both in the present and the future. The experiences of working class life, together with organisation in the factory under MAWU, have resulted in an unshakable class solidarity. Part of this class solidarity has been alliances with the youth which were built up in the early days of the strike and have been strengthened by the Inkatha attacks. This struggle under the leadership of the workers, is not only leading them back to Sarmcol (or forcing Sarmcol out) but has on its agenda the abolition of apartheid and the attainment of socialism.

It is believed that this thesis has gone some of the way in attempting not to only understand the question

of the process of consciousness formation but also the broader relationship between structure and subject. Ordinary people do shape their consciousness despite the dominant structures and ideology. However, the findings of this thesis must be mediated by reality. The empirical evidence upon which these conclusions have been based is a case study of one community and one factory in one magistral district of Natal. Thus much more work needs to be done before these findings can be confidently generalised to the rest of Natal. Yet, it is still believed that those who want to delve into similar areas would benefit much by taking the experiences of the Sarmcol strikers into account.

**APPENDIX 1**

Ngesi Zulu buka ikhasi lokugeti

# SURVEY FOR SARMCOL WORKERS

## INSTRUCTIONS

Before answering the questionnaire it is important to note the following:

1. The information you fill in on this questionnaire is confidential. The results will be fed into a computer, and the individual information will never be utilized.
2. This questionnaire is the first part of the research, the next step will be to collect workers' life stories. It is only for this reason that your name and address are asked at the beginning of the questionnaire.
3. It is important to answer every question and not leave any out, as this will affect the results.
4. It is important to carefully follow the instructions regarding the answering of each question.
5. Most important is that the answers should be as accurate as possible.
6. Most of the questions are multiple choice, and you are required to select the answer which applies to your situation. Answer these questions by putting a cross in the box next to the answer e.g.
5. What is your present house made of? (If you are living in a compound this refers to your family house.)

31

Daub hut  
 Daub house  
 Brick/concrete house  
 Shack of tin/wood/beer cartons  
 Other

1
2
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4
5

Do not worry about the numbers in the boxes. They have nothing to do with your answering of the question - they are for the purposes of the computer.

7. Only answer ONE option for each question.

284.

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

CLOCK NUMBER:..... 1-5

CASE NUMBER:..... 6-8

1. What is your age? Put a cross in the box next to the category into which you fit. 9-10

15-20  
21-25  
26-30  
31-35  
36-40  
41-45  
46-50  
51-55  
56-60  
61-65  
over 65

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11

2. In which township/area do you presently live? (By this is meant your family home.) 11-12

Mpophomeni  
Mevana  
Howick West  
Lions River  
Sweet Waters  
Impendhle  
Other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

If your answer was other then please specify the place,  
.....  
.....

3. When you are working at Sarmcol do you live in the Compound? 13

Yes  
No

1
2

4. Have you always lived there? (i.e. the area referred to in Question 2.) 14

Yes  
No

1
2

IF YOU ANSWERED YES GO TO QUESTION 5.

IF YOU ANSWERED NO, THEN ANSWER PARTS (A)-(E).

(a) When did you move into your present area?

15-16

1968

01

1969

02

1970

03

1971

04

1972

05

1973

06

1974

07

1975

08

1976

09

1977

10

1978

11

1979

12

1980

13

1981

14

1982

15

1983

16

1984

17

1985

18

Other

19

If your answer was other then please specify the year,

.....

(b) Where did you live before?

17-18

Howick West

1

Zenzele

2

Mevana

3

Tweedie

4

Other

5

If your answer was other then please specify the place (If you lived on a farm, please give the name).

.....

(c) Why did you move?

19-20

The farmer evicted us

1

The government removed us

2

There was no work

3

There was work but the wages were low

4

Other

5

If your answer was other then please specify the reason

.....

- (d) Where were you born? (If it was a farm, then please give the name). 21-22

.....  
 .....

- (e) If you have lived in any other places, list them, the years you lived there and the reason you moved. 23-30

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

5. What is your present house made of? (If you are living in the compound, this question refers to your family house.) 31

Daub hut  
 Daub house  
 Brick/concrete house  
 Shack of tin/wood/beer cartons  
 Other

1
2
3
4
5

6. Question 5. is now repeated in relation to the houses you have lived in in the past. If you have only lived in one place then move straight to Question 7. Part (a) relates to the first place you lived in, part (b) to the second etc. Fill in the name of the area and then answer the question.

- (a) AREA/PLACE ..... 32-33

Daub hut  
 Daub house  
 Brick/concrete house  
 Shack of tin/wood/beer cartons  
 Other

1
2
3
4
5

34

- (b) AREA/PLACE ..... 35-36

Daub hut  
 Daub house  
 Brick/concrete house  
 Shack of tin/wood/beer cartons  
 Other

1
2
3
4
5

37

- (c) AREA/PLACE ..... 38-39

Daub hut  
 Daub house  
 Brick/concrete house  
 Shack of tin/wood/beer cartons  
 Other

1
2
3
4
5

40

(d) AREA/PLACE..... 41-42

Daub hut	1	43
Daub house	2	
Brick/concrete house	3	
Shack of tin/wood/beer cartons	4	
Other	5	

7. What kind of facilities do you have where you live presently? (i.e. your family home.)

(a) How many rooms in your house?

1	01	44-45
2	02	
3	03	
4	04	
5	05	
6	06	
7	07	
8	08	
9	09	
10 or more	10	

(b) What sewerage system do you have?

bucket	1	46
pit system	2	
water-borne	3	
veld	4	
other	5	

(c) What access to water do you have?

tap in your house	1	47
tap in the street	2	
no water	3	
other	4	

(d) What power do you use in your house? (Answer yes or no.)

	YES	NO	
electricity	1	2	48
gas	1	2	49
candles	1	2	50
own generator	1	2	51
paraffin	1	2	52
wood/coal	1	2	53
other	1	2	54

(e) What is your road surface?

tarred	1	55
gravel	2	
sand	3	
no roads	4	

- (f) Are there street lights? 56
- yes 1  
no 2
- (g) Is there a community hall? 57
- yes 1  
no 2
- (h) Is there a clinic? 58
- yes 1  
no 2
- (i) Is there a beerhall? 59
- yes 1  
no 2
- (j) Are there commercial shops? 60
- yes 1  
no 2
- (k) Is there a postal service? 61
- to post boxes 1  
to houses 2  
none 3
- (l) Is there (a) junior primary school/s? 62
- yes 1  
no 2
- If the answer was yes, then how many junior  
primary schools are there? 63
- 1 1  
2 2  
3 3  
4 4  
5 or more 5
- (m) Is there (a) senior primary school/s? 64
- yes 1  
no 2
- If the answer was yes, then how many senior  
primary schools are there? 65
- 1 1  
2 2  
3 3  
4 4  
5 or more 5
- (n) Is there (a) high school/s? 66
- yes 1  
no 2

If the answer was yes, then how many high schools are there?

67

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 or more

1
2
3
4
5

(o) Do you have telephones?

68

no phones  
only call boxes - well supplied  
only call boxes - very few  
few houses have phones  
most houses have phones

1
2
3
4
5

(p) Do you keep chickens?

69

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, about how many do you have?

70

1-5  
6-10  
11-20  
21-30  
31-40  
41-50  
over 50

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

(q) Do you keep goats?

71

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, about how many do you have?

72

1-5  
6-10  
11-15  
16-20  
21-30  
31-50  
51-100  
over 100

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

(r) Do you keep sheep?

73

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, about how many do you have?

740

- |          |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|
| 1-5      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6-10     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11-15    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16-20    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21-30    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31-50    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51-100   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| over 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(s) Do you keep cows?

yes  
no

- |                          |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

75

If the answer was yes, about how many do you have?

76

- |          |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|
| 1-5      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6-10     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11-15    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16-20    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21-30    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31-50    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51-100   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| over 100 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(t) Do you grow any agricultural products?

yes  
no

- |                          |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

77

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS NO THEN GO TO QUESTION 8. HOWEVER, IF YOUR ANSWER WAS YES THEN ANSWER PART (i), (ii) and (iii).

(i) How much land do you have? (At the place where your family lives).

78

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Garden in front of house | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| half an acre             | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1 acre                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2-5 acres                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6-10 acres               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| more than 10 acres       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(ii) Is it for the household's consumption?

79

yes  
no

- |                          |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

- (iii) Which of the following do you grow?  
(Answer yes or no).

	YES	NO	
mealies	1	2	1
potatoes	1	2	2
cabbage	1	2	3
sweet potatoes	1	2	4
beans	1	2	5
carrots	1	2	6
spinach	1	2	7
peas	1	2	8
other	1	2	9

8. Question 7. is now repeated, in relation to the areas you have lived in in the past. If you have only lived in one place then move straight to Question 9. Part (a) relates to the first place you lived in, part (b) to the second etc. Fill in the name of the area and then answer the question.

(a) AREA/PLACE:..... 10-11

- (a) How many rooms were in your house?

1	01
2	02
3	03
4	04
5	05
6	06
7	07
8	08
9	09
10 or more	10

12-13

- (b) What sewerage system did you have?

bucket  
pit system  
water-borne  
veld  
other

1
2
3
4
5

14

- (c) What access to water did you have?

tap in your house  
tap in the street  
no water  
other

1
2
3
4

15

(d) What power did you use in your house? (Answer yes or no.)

	YES	NO	
electricity	1	2	16
gas	1	2	17
candles	1	2	18
own generator	1	2	19
paraffin	1	2	20
wood/coal	1	2	21
other	1	2	22

(e) What was the road surface? 23

tarred	1
gravel	2
sand	3
no roads	4

(f) Were there street lights? 24

yes	1
no	2

(g) Was there a community hall? 25

yes	1
no	2

(h) Was there a clinic? 26

yes	1
no	2

(i) Was there a beerhall? 27

yes	1
no	2

(j) Were there commercial shops? 28

yes	1
no	2

(k) Was there a postal service? 29

to post boxes	1
to houses	2
none	3

(l) Was there (a) junior primary school/s? 30

yes	1
no	2

If the answer was yes, then how many junior primary schools were there? 31

1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5 or more	5

(m) Was there (a) senior primary school/s? 32

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, then how many senior primary schools were there?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 or more

1
2
3
4
5

(n) Was there (a) high school/s? 34

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, then how many high schools were there?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 or more

1
2
3
4
5

(o) Did you have telephones? 36

no phones  
only call boxes - well supplied  
only call boxes - very few  
few houses have phones  
most houses have phones

1
2
3
4
5

(p) Did you keep chickens? 37

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 38

1-5  
6-10  
11-20  
21-30  
31-40  
41-50  
over 50

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

(q) Did you keep goats? 39

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 40

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(r) Did you keep sheep?

yes	1
no	2

41

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 42

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(s) Did you keep cows?

yes	1
no	2

43

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 44

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(t) Did you grow any agricultural products?

yes	1
no	2

45

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS NO THEN GO TO QUESTION 8 OR PART (B).  
HOWEVER IF YOUR ANSWER WAS YES THEN ANSWER PART (i), (ii)  
AND (iii) OF THIS SECTION.

(i) How much land did you have? 46

Garden in front of house	1
half an acre	2
1 acre	3
2-5 acres	4
6-10 acres	5
more than 10 acres	6

(ii) Was it for the household's consumption? 47

yes	1
no	2

(iii) Which of the following did you grow?  
(Answer yes or no).

	YES	NO	
mealies	1	2	48
potatoes	1	2	49
cabbage	1	2	50
sweet potatoes	1	2	51
beans	1	2	52
carrots	1	2	53
spinach	1	2	54
peas	1	2	55
other	1	2	56

(b) AREA/PLACE:..... 57-58

(a) How many rooms were in your house? 59-60

1	01
2	02
3	03
4	04
5	05
6	06
7	07
8	08
9	09
10 or more	10

(b) What sewerage system did you have? 61

bucket	1
pit system	2
water-borne	3
veld	4
other	5

(c) What access to water did you have? 62

tap in your house	1
tap in the street	2
no water	3
other	4

(d) What power did you use in your house?  
(Answer yes or no.)

296.

	YES	NO	
electricity	1	2	63
gas	1	2	64
candles	1	2	65
own generator	1	2	66
paraffin	1	2	67
wood/coal	1	2	68
other	1	2	69

(e) What was your road surface?

tarred  
gravel  
sand  
no roads

1
2
3
4

70

(f) Were there street lights?

yes  
no

1
2

71

(g) Was there a community hall?

yes  
no

1
2

72

(h) Was there a clinic?

yes  
no

1
2

73

(i) Was there a beerhall?

yes  
no

1
2

74

(j) Were there commercial shops?

yes  
no

1
2

75

(k) Was there a postal service?

to post boxes  
to houses  
none

1
2
3

76

(l) Was there (a) junior primary school/s?

yes  
no

1
2

77

If the answer was yes, then how many junior primary schools were there?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 or more

1
2
3
4
5

78

(m) Was there (a) senior primary school/s? 79

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, then how many senior primary schools were there? 1

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 or more

1
2
3
4
5

(n) Was there (a) high school/s? 2

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, then how many high schools were there? 3

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 or more

1
2
3
4
5

(o) Did you have telephones? 4

no phones  
only call boxes - well supplied  
only call boxes - very few  
few houses have phones  
most houses have phones

1
2
3
4
5

(p) Did you keep chickens? 5

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 6

1-5  
6-10  
11-20  
21-30  
31-40  
41-50  
over 50

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

(q) Did you keep goats? 7

yes  
no

1
2

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 8

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 1-5      | 1 |
| 6-10     | 2 |
| 11-15    | 3 |
| 16-20    | 4 |
| 21-30    | 5 |
| 31-50    | 6 |
| 51-100   | 7 |
| over 100 | 8 |

(r) Did you keep sheep?

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| yes | 1 |
| no  | 2 |

9

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 10

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 1-5      | 1 |
| 6-10     | 2 |
| 11-15    | 3 |
| 16-20    | 4 |
| 21-30    | 5 |
| 31-50    | 6 |
| 51-100   | 7 |
| over 100 | 8 |

(s) Did you keep cows?

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| yes | 1 |
| no  | 2 |

11

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 12

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 1-5      | 1 |
| 6-10     | 2 |
| 11-15    | 3 |
| 16-20    | 4 |
| 21-30    | 5 |
| 31-50    | 6 |
| 51-100   | 7 |
| over 100 | 8 |

(t) Did you grow any agricultural products?

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| yes | 1 |
| no  | 2 |

13

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS NO THEN GO TO QUESTION 8 OR PART (C).  
HOWEVER IF YOUR ANSWER WAS YES THEN ANSWER PART (i),  
(ii) AND (iii) OF THIS SECTION.

- (i) How much land did you have? (At the place where your family lives). 14

Garden in front of house  
half an acre  
1 acre  
2-5 acres  
6-10 acres  
more than 10 acres

1
2
3
4
5
6

- (ii) Was it for the household's consumption? 15

yes  
no

1
2

- (iii) Which of the following did you grow? (Answer yes or no).

	YES	NO	
mealies	1	2	16
potatoes	1	2	17
cabbage	1	2	18
sweet potatoes	1	2	19
beans	1	2	20
carrots	1	2	21
spinach	1	2	22
peas	1	2	23
other	1	2	24

- (c) AREA/PLACE..... 25-26

- (a) How many rooms were in your house? 27-28

1	01
2	02
3	03
4	04
5	05
6	06
7	07
8	08
9	09
10 or more	10

- (b) What sewerage system did you have? 29

bucket  
pit system  
water-borne  
veld  
other

1
2
3
4
5

- (c) What access to water did you have? 30

tap in your house  
tap in the street  
no water  
other

1
2
3
4

- (d) What power did you use in your house?  
(Answer yes or no.)

	YES	NO	
electricity	1	2	31
gas	1	2	32
candles	1	2	33
own generator	1	2	34
paraffin	1	2	35
wood/coal	1	2	36
other	1	2	37

- (e) What was your road surface? 38

tarred	1
gravel	2
sand	3
no roads	4

- (f) Were there street lights? 39

yes	1
no	2

- (g) Was there a community hall? 40

yes	1
no	2

- (h) Was there a clinic? 41

yes	1
no	2

- (i) Was there a beerhall? 42

yes	1
no	2

- (j) Were there commercial shops? 43

yes	1
no	2

- (k) Was there a postal service? 44

to post boxes	1
to houses	2
none	3

- (l) Was there (a) junior primary school/s? 45

yes	1
no	2

If the answer was yes, then how many junior primary schools were there? 46

1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5 or more	5

(m) Was there (a) senior primary school/s? 47

yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
no	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the answer was yes, then how many senior primary schools were there? 48

1	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 or more	<input type="checkbox"/>

(n) Was there (a) high school/s? 49

yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
no	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the answer was yes, then how many high schools were there? 50

1	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 or more	<input type="checkbox"/>

(o) Did you have telephones? 51

no phones	<input type="checkbox"/>
only call boxes - well supplied	<input type="checkbox"/>
only call boxes - very few	<input type="checkbox"/>
few houses have phones	<input type="checkbox"/>
most houses have phones	<input type="checkbox"/>

(p) Did you keep chickens? 52

yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
no	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 53

1-5	<input type="checkbox"/>
6-10	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-20	<input type="checkbox"/>
21-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
31-40	<input type="checkbox"/>
41-50	<input type="checkbox"/>
over 50	<input type="checkbox"/>

(q) Did you keep goats? 54

yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
no	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the answer was yes, about how many did you 55  
have?

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(r) Did you keep sheep?

yes  
no

1
2

56

If the answer was yes, about how many did you 57  
have?

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(s) Did you keep cows?

yes  
no

1
2

58

If the answer was yes, about how many did you 59  
have?

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(t) Did you grow any agricultural products?

yes  
no

1
2

60

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS NO THEN GO TO QUESTION 8 OR PART D.  
HOWEVER IF YOUR ANSWER WAS YES THEN ANSWER PART (i), (ii)  
AND (iii) OF THIS SECTION.

- (i) How much land did you have? (At the place 61  
where your family lived).

Garden in front of house  
half an acre  
1 acre  
2-5 acres  
6-10 acres  
more than 10 acres

1
2
3
4
5
6

- (ii) Was it for the household's consumption? 62

yes  
no

1
2

- (iii) Which of the following did you grow?  
(Answer yes or no).

mealies  
potatoes  
cabbage  
sweet potatoes  
beans  
carrots  
spinach  
peas  
other

YES	NO	
1	2	63
1	2	64
1	2	65
1	2	66
1	2	67
1	2	68
1	2	69
1	2	70
1	2	71

- (d) AREA/PLACE..... 72-73

- (a) How many rooms were in your house?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 or more

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10

- (b) What sewerage system did you have?

bucket  
pit system  
water-borne  
veld  
other

1
2
3
4
5

- (c) What access to water did you have?

tap in your house  
tap in the street  
no water  
other

1
2
3
4

- (d) What power did you use in your house? (Answer yes or no.)

	YES	NO	
electricity	1	2	78
gas	1	2	79
candles	1	2	1
own generator	1	2	2
paraffin	1	2	3
wood/coal	1	2	4
other	1	2	5

- (e) What was your road surface?

tarred	1	6
gravel	2	
sand	3	
no roads	4	

- (f) Were there street lights?

yes	1	7
no	2	

- (g) Was there a community hall?

yes	1	8
no	2	

- (h) Was there a clinic?

yes	1	9
no	2	

- (i) Was there a beerhall?

yes	1	10
no	2	

- (j) Were there commercial shops?

yes	1	11
no	2	

- (k) Was there a postal service?

to post boxes	1	12
to houses	2	
none	3	

- (l) Was there (a) junior primary school/s?

yes	1	13
no	2	

If the answer was yes, then how many junior primary schools were there? 14

1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5 or more	5

(m) Was there (a) senior primary school/s? 15

yes ☐ 1

no ☐ 2

If the answer was yes, then how many senior primary schools were there? 16

1 ☐ 1

2 ☐ 2

3 ☐ 3

4 ☐ 4

5 or more ☐ 5

(n) Was there (a) high school/s? 17

yes ☐ 1

no ☐ 2

If the answer was yes, then how many high schools were there? 18

1 ☐ 1

2 ☐ 2

3 ☐ 3

4 ☐ 4

5 or more ☐ 5

(o) Did you have telephones? 19

no phones ☐ 1

only call boxes - well supplied ☐ 2

only call boxes - very few ☐ 3

few houses have phones ☐ 4

most houses have phones ☐ 5

(p) Did you keep chickens? 20

yes ☐ 1

no ☐ 2

If the answer was yes, about how many did you have? 21

1-5 ☐ 1

6-10 ☐ 2

11-20 ☐ 3

21-30 ☐ 4

31-40 ☐ 5

41-50 ☐ 6

over 50 ☐ 7

(q) Did you keep goats? 22

yes ☐ 1

no ☐ 2

If the answer was yes, about how many did you <sup>306.</sup>23 have?

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(r) Did you keep sheep?

yes	1
no	2

24

If the answer was yes, about how many did you 25 have?

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(s) Did you keep cows?

yes	1
no	2

26

If the answer was yes, about how many did you 27 have?

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-30	5
31-50	6
51-100	7
over 100	8

(t) Did you grow any agricultural products?

yes	1
no	2

28

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS NO THEN GO TO QUESTION 8. HOWEVER IF YOUR ANSWER WAS YES THEN ANSWER PART (i), (ii) AND (iii) OF THIS SECTION.

- (i) How much land did you have? (At the place where your family lived). 29

Garden in front of house  
half an acre  
1 acre  
2-5 acres  
6-10 acres  
more than 10 acres

1
2
3
4
5
6

- (ii) Was it for the household's consumption? 30

yes  
no

1
2

- (iii) Which of the following did you grow?  
(Answer yes or no).

	YES	NO	
mealies	1	2	31
potatoes	1	2	32
cabbage	1	2	33
sweet potatoes	1	2	34
beans	1	2	35
carrots	1	2	36
spinach	1	2	37
peas	1	2	38
other	1	2	39

9. What are the property arrangements regarding your house? 40

freehold  
99 year lease  
30 year lease  
rented (house)  
squatting  
lodger  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

- If you rent your house to whom do you pay rent?

white farmer  
KwaZulu government  
Howick Town Council  
Administration Board  
Private landlord  
chief  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

41

10. Question 9. is now repeated in relation to the areas you have lived in in the past. If you have only lived in one place then move straight to Question 11. Part (a) relates to the first place you lived in, part (b) to the second etc. Fill in the name of the area and then answer the question.

(a) AREA/PLACE; ..... 42-43

What were the property arrangements regarding your house? 44

freehold  
99 year lease  
30 year lease  
rented (house)  
squatting  
lodger  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

If you rented your house to whom did you pay rent? 45

white farmer  
KwaZulu government  
Howick Town Council  
Administration Board  
Private landlord  
chief  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

(b) AREA/PLACE..... 46-47

What were the property arrangements regarding your house? 48

freehold  
99 year lease  
30 year lease  
rented (house)  
squatting  
lodger  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

If you rented your house to whom did you pay rent? 49

white farmer  
KwaZulu government  
Howick Town Council  
Administration Board  
Private landlord  
chief  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

(c) AREA/PLACE..... 50-51

What were the property arrangements regarding your house? 52

freehold  
 99 year lease  
 30 year lease  
 rented (house)  
 squatting  
 lodger  
 other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

If you rented your house to whom did you pay rent?

53

white farmer  
 KwaZulu government  
 Howick Town Council  
 Administration Board  
 Private landlord  
 chief  
 other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

(d) AREA/PLACE..... 54-55

What were the property arrangements regarding your house? 56

freehold  
 99 year lease  
 30 year lease  
 rented (house)  
 squatting  
 lodger  
 other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

If you rented your house to whom did you pay rent?

57

white farmer  
 KwaZulu government  
 Howick Town Council  
 Administration Board  
 Private landlord  
 chief  
 other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

11. What is your marital status?

58

single  
 married  
 divorced  
 co-habitation  
 seperated  
 widowed

1
2
3
4
5
6

IF YOU ARE SINGLE THEN GO TO QUESTION 13.

12. What type of marriage do/did you have?  
 church/chrstian  
 civil  
 traditional  
 hindu  
 moslem  
 other

1
2
3
4
5
6

59

13. How many wives do you have?

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 or more

1
2
3
4
5

60

14. Does your wife live with you?

yes  
no

1
2

61

If no where does she live?

in rural area  
 at her job  
 own place (divorced/seperated)  
 other

1
2
3
4

62

15. How many children do you have under the age of 16 63-64 years?

0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 or more

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11

63-64

16. How many children do you have over the age of 16 65-66 years?

0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 or more

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11

65-66

311.  
67-68

17. How many of your children are at school?

0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 or more

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11

18. What religion are you?

Roman Catholic  
Methodist  
Anglican  
Zionist  
African Independent  
Traditional  
Moslem  
Hindu  
Other

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

69

19. Do your children live with you?

yes  
no

1
2

70

If no, where do the others live?

with their mother  
in their own houses  
away schooling  
relatives  
other

1
2
3
4
5

71

20. How many people are dependent on your earnings?

0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15 or more

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11
12
13
14
15
16

72-73

21. Who lives in your house? (This refers to your family house. Answer yes or no.)

	YES	NO	
wife	1	2	74
husband	1	2	75
children	1	2	76
sister	1	2	77
brother	1	2	78
mother	1	2	79
father	1	2	1
father-in-law	1	2	2
mother-in-law	1	2	3
friends	1	2	4
lodgers	1	2	5
other	1	2	6

22. What is the total number of people (including your- 7-8  
self) living in your house?

1	01
2	02
3	03
4	04
5	05
6	06
7	07
8	08
9	09
10	10
11	11
12	12
13	13
14	14
15	15
16 or more	16

23. Is anyone else who lives in your house employed?

yes  
no

1
2

9

IF NO, THEN GO TO QUESTION 24.

IF YES THEN FILL IN THE FOLLOWING TABLE.

	WHO	OCCUPATIONS	WAGES/WEEK
1.			10-15
2.			16-21
3.			22-27
4.			28-33
5.			34-39
6.			40-45

24. What schooling do you have?

none  
sub A - std 1  
std 2  
std 3  
std 4  
std 5  
std 6  
std 7  
std 8  
std 9  
std 10

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11

46-47

25. Do you have any other education/training?

yes  
no

1
2

48

26. What was your first job?

SARMCOL  
other production  
agricultural  
domestic  
clerical  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6

49

27. How old were you when you were first employed?

10-15  
16-20  
21-25  
26-30  
over 30

1
2
3
4
5

50

28. How many jobs have you had since you started working?

1  
2  
3-4  
5-6  
7-8  
9-10  
11-12  
13-14  
15-16  
17 or more

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10

51-52

29. Are you working at present?

yes  
no

1
2

53

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS YES THEN ANSWER PARTS (i)-(iii) AND THEN GO ON TO QUESTION 30. IF YOUR ANSWER WAS NO THEN ANSWER PARTS (iv)-(viii) AND THEN GO ON TO QUESTION 30.

(i) Where are you working?

SARMCOL  
other production  
agriculture  
domestic  
clerical  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6

54

(ii) How long have you worked there for?

1-6 months  
7-12 months  
1-2 years  
3-5 years  
6-10 years  
11-15 years  
16-20 years  
21-30 years  
over 30 years

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

55

(iii) What is your present wage?

0-R50/week  
R51-R100/week  
R101-R110/week  
R111-R120/week  
R121-R130/week  
R131-R140/week  
R141-R150/week  
R151-R175/week  
R176-R200/week  
over R200/week

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10

56-57

(iv) Where was your last job?

SARMCOL  
other production  
agriculture  
domestic  
clerical  
other

1
2
3
4
5
6

58

(v) How long have you been unemployed for?

1-6 months  
7-12 months  
13-18 months  
18-24 months  
2 - 2 1/2 years  
2 1/2 - 3 years  
over 3 years

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

59

(vi) How long did you work there for?

- 1-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-30 years
- over 30 years

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

60

(vii) For what reason are you unemployed?

- left of own accord
- retrenched
- fired because on strike
- fired, other reason
- other

1
2
3
4
5

61

(viii) Did you belong to a trade union?

- yes
- no

1
2

62

30. Have you ever worked at SARMCOL?

- yes
- no

1
2

63

ONLY CONTINUE IF YOUR ANSWER TO QUESTION 30 WAS YES.  
OTHERWISE GO STRAIGHT TO QUESTION 40.

31. When did you first start working at SARMCOL?

- 1930-1940
- 1941-1950
- 1951-1960
- 1961-1965
- 1966-1970
- 1971-1975
- 1976-1980
- 1981-1985 (April)
- after May 1985

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

64

32. Are you still working at SARMCOL?

- yes
- no

1
2

65

33. What grade did you start at?

Grade 1  
Grade 2  
Grade 3  
Grade 4  
Grade 5  
Grade 6  
Grade 7

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

66

34. Are you still in the same grade?

yes  
no

1
2

67

35. Was there a time when you worked at SARMCOL and they had no grades? 68

yes  
no

1
2

36. While working at SARMCOL have you ever belonged to a trade union? 69

yes  
no

1
2

If yes did you ever belong to any of the following?  
(Mark yes or no.)

	yes	no	
Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU)	1	2	70
South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU)	1	2	71
Howick Rubber Workers Union	1	2	72
Rubber and Cable Workers Union	1	2	73
Other	1	2	74

37. Do/will you receive a pension from SARMCOL?

yes  
no

1
2

75

If yes, how much is it (per month)?

0-R25  
R26-R50  
R51-R75  
R76-R100  
R101-R125  
R126-R150  
R151-R175  
R176-R200  
over R200

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9

76

38. Did you ever apply for a bursera from SARMCOL for 77  
your children's schooling?

yes  
no

1
2

If yes did you receive it?

yes  
no

1
2

78

39. Did SARMCOL ever provide you with a home loan scheme? 79

yes  
no

1
2

40. In which location/area was your father born? 1-2

.....  
.....  
.....

41. In which location/area was your mother born? 3-4

.....  
.....  
.....

42. Did your father ever work at SARMCOL?

yes  
no

1
2

5

43. Is your father still alive?

yes  
no

1
2

6

44. Is your mother still alive?

yes  
no

1
2

7

45. In which location/area was your grandfather born? 8-9

.....  
.....  
.....

46. In which location/area was your grandmother born? 10-11

.....  
.....  
.....

47. Did your grandfather ever work at SARMCOL?

yes  
no

1
2

12

48. Is your grandfather still alive?

yes  
no

1
2

13

49. Is your grandmother still alive?

yes  
no

1
2

14

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP, PATIENCE AND CO-OPERATION

**APPENDIX 2**

### OUTLINE USED FOR INDEPTH QUESTIONNAIRES

This was a basic outline noting points that should be raised in discussion. The interviews themselves were discussions on the various topics rather than traditional questions and answers. On average they were between one and half to two hours long. Some of them took place over two sessions.

#### **About family life and history**

- which farm were you born on
- which district was the farm in
- were there cattle
- who was in your family
- what was the attitude of the farmer
- could you have cattle
- did you have access to land
- how many other families lived on that farm
- did the 6th month system operate
- where did people work (Sarmcol how many)
- were you under any chief
- how did that operate
- what kind of work did you do on the farm
- quality of life
- why did you leave
- was there any resistance
- how did you find the new place, why that place
- age left that place
- any stories about how your family got to be in that area
- can you say how your ancestors got their name
- how did people come from Impendle to Howick
- when did you get married
- children born

#### **SACTU period**

##### **In Community:**

- hear anything about Congress and its campaigns
- potato boycott
- stayaways (1957 1/day, 1958 1/day & general elections, 1961)
- how did they organise
- how did you hear
- meetings
- reaction of police

##### **Sarmcol:**

- did you belong to Gwala's union

APPENDIX 3

CONSTITUTIONOF THEHOWICK RUBBER WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNIONDEFINITIONS

CLAUSE 1. Unless the contrary intentions appear any terms used in this Constitution importing the masculine gender shall include females, words importing the singular shall include the plural; and vice versa. Further, unless inconsistent with the context:

(i) "Benefits of Membership" shall, in addition to any direct or indirect rights and benefits provided for in this Constitution mean the right to enjoy all customary benefits of trade union membership which shall be deemed to include: the right to criticise, attend the appropriate meetings of the Union and take part in discussion thereof, exercise a vote, hold office and to propose or second any resolution or nomination at the appropriate meetings of the Union.

(ii) "Duties of Membership" or "Obligations of Membership" shall, in addition to such other duties and obligations as are imposed by this Constitution, mean the duty to pay subscriptions or any other dues regularly, carry out the decisions of the Union, observe trade union conditions of labour, attend as many meetings as possible, generally take an interest in the affairs of the Union and comply with the terms of this Constitution.

(iii) "Member in Good Standing" shall mean a member whose subscriptions or any other dues are not more than three months in arrears and/or who is not under suspension from membership of the Union in terms of Clause 43 and/or who has not tendered his resignation in writing from membership of the Union.

(iv) "Committee" shall mean the Executive Committee of the Union elected in terms of Clause 32 of this Constitution.

NAME AND JURISDICTION

CLAUSE 2. The name of the Union shall be the "HOWICK RUBBER WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION" and its Head Office shall be situated within the radius of thirty (30) miles from Pietermaritzburg or such other place as the Annual General Meeting may determine from time to time.

CLAUSE 3. The Union shall operate in the rubber industry within the Magisterial district of Howick, which industry shall mean all work connected with the manufacture of rubber goods.

OBJECTS

CLAUSE 4. The aims and objects of the Union shall be as follows:

(A) To organise all employees who are eligible for membership into the Union

(B) To secure the strictest observance of any Wage Determination Agreement or Award for the members and all recognised rights and privileges.

(C) To secure improvements in the conditions of employment in the rubber industry.

4/1/.....

- (5) To regulate relations between members and their employers and to protect and further the interests of members in relation to their employment by means of agreements with employers or any other lawful means.
- (6) To assist members in obtaining and retaining employment.
- (7) To consider and advise on any legislation and to promote, support or oppose any proposed legislation as may be deemed to be in the interests of members.
- (8) To remove barriers between workers and to promote unity of action, co-operation and closer relationship between all workers whether nationally or internationally, in the belief that the interests of all workers are identical.
- (9) To co-operate with and assist other workers' organisations in the general interests of the working class movement.
- (10) To co-operate as far as possible with employers or any employers' organisation.
- (11) To represent members on any Industrial Council or Conciliation Board which may be established to deal with matters affecting members and on any public, Government or other bodies.
- (12) To do such other lawful things as may appear to be in the interests of members and the Union.

MEMBERSHIP

Clause 5. Membership of the Union shall be open to the following persons:

- (i) Employees engaged in the South African Rubber Manufacturing Company Limited (Howick)
- (ii) Employees engaged in the rubber work as stated in Clause 3.
- (iii) Unemployed persons seeking employment in such industry.

Clause 6. Save as provided in Clause 9 (ii) applications for admission or re-admission to membership of the Union shall be lodged in writing with the Secretary of the Union. Every application for membership shall be considered by the Committee within one month of receipt thereof.

Clause 7. If admission or re-admission to membership is refused the applicant shall be notified immediately in writing and he shall have a right of appeal to the next General Meeting of the Union.

Clause 8. An applicant shall be entitled to call witnesses and to appear personally at the General Meeting of the Union in connexion with the appeal lodged in terms of Clause 7 and he shall also be entitled to solicit support from amongst members of the Union in connexion therewith.

Clause 9. (i) A member who has resigned or been expelled from membership of the Union may be re-admitted to the Union on such conditions as the Committee may determine, subject to the right of such applicant to appeal in accordance with the provisions for discipline against any conditions so imposed on him.

(ii) An applicant who has resigned or been expelled from membership of the Union on more than one occasion shall be re-admitted to the Union with the approval of the General Meeting.

CLAUSE 10/.....

TH

*[Handwritten mark]*

CLAUSE 10. Every applicant shall at the time of joining supply the Committee in writing with the following :

- (i) His full name
- (ii) Residential address
- (iii) Salary
- (iv) Whether 18 years of age or over
- (v) Occupation

Any changes in the said particulars shall be notified to the Secretary within seven days thereof.

CLAUSE 11. An member upon admission shall be provided with a membership card by the Secretary showing his full name, membership number and date of joining and on which shall be recorded the subscriptions, levies, fines or any other dues paid by him.

CLAUSE 12. A member upon entering employment in a trade or occupation falling outside the jurisdiction of this Union as defined in Clause 3 or upon ceasing to be an employee, except if unemployed, shall be released forthwith from any further obligations and shall forfeit all further benefits of membership. Written notice of any such circumstances shall be furnished to the Secretary without delay.

CLAUSE 13. Subject to the provisions of Clause 63 resignation from membership of the Union may be effected by giving three months' notice in writing to the Secretary of the Union provided that no notice of resignation shall have any effect until all moneys due to the Union by such member have been paid. A member shall not be released from any obligations of membership until the required period of notice has fully expired.

CLAUSE 14. (i) On ceasing to be a member of the Union for any reason no person shall have any claim on the funds of the Union but shall continue to be liable for all subscriptions, levies or any other moneys due by him to the Union as at the date of ceasing to be a member.

(ii) He shall also return his membership card to the Secretary but shall be entitled to receive a Certificate of Membership showing his full name, the date of joining and leaving the Union, the reasons for leaving, any office held and his record with the Union.

CLAUSE 15. A member who for any reason whatsoever is in bad standing in terms of definition (iii) shall forfeit his benefits of membership but shall continue to be subject to the duties of membership nevertheless. On payment of the arrear subscriptions or other dues, or on termination or removal of any period of suspension, or upon the withdrawal in writing of any notice of resignation from membership of the Union, as the case may be, the benefits of membership shall be restored forthwith.

CLAUSE 16. The Secretary shall after the acceptance of an application of membership place thereon a number which shall be in consecutive order and be known as the Membership number. All applications for membership and letters of resignation shall be filed in proper order by the Secretary.

SUBSCRIPTIONS, LEVIES AND FINES /.....

SUBSCRIPTIONS, LEVIES AND ENTRANCE FEES

- CLAUSE 17. Whenever a non-member desires the Union to take up any complaint on his behalf he shall be required to join the Union and, in addition to the ordinary subscription, pay an equivalent of six months' subscriptions as an entrance fee before such complaint may be dealt with by any officer or employee of the Union. The entrance fees shall be a sum of six-pence (6d.) payable on admission to membership.
- CLAUSE 18. The subscriptions payable by members shall be as follows:
- 2/- (two shillings) for members earning up to and including £1. 10. 0. per week.
  - 2/3 (two shillings and three pence) for members earning up to and including £1. 15. 0. per week.
  - 2/6 (two shillings and six-pence) for members earning up to and including £2. 0. 0. per week.
  - 2/9 (two shillings and nine pence) for members earning up to and including £2. 10. 0. per week.
  - 3/- (three shillings) for members earning up to and including £3. 0. 0. per week.
  - 4/- (four shillings) for members earning over £3 per week.
- CLAUSE 19. Members who are not earning wages or compensation in lieu thereof owing to unemployment, illness or any other cause shall be exempt from payment of subscriptions and other dues during such period without loss of standing.
- CLAUSE 20. The monthly subscriptions shall be paid in advance at the beginning of each month as from the date of acceptance to membership of the Union, for which purpose a part of a month shall be deemed to be a month and the date of acceptance the beginning of the month.
- CLAUSE 21. Any moneys paid by a member to the Union shall be appropriated to dues most in arrear.
- CLAUSE 22. A levy to secure funds for any special purpose may be imposed upon all members in such amount and upon such principles as may be determined by a ballot of the members at a General Meeting, provided that the intention to impose such levy shall be clearly stated in the notice of such meeting. Provided always that no member may be levied in excess of 10/- (ten shillings) during one calendar year.
- OFFICERS AND MEETINGS
- CLAUSE 23. The highest authority within the Union shall be the General Meeting of members. A General Meeting shall be held at least once a quarter on a date to be fixed by the Committee and the interval between General Meetings shall not exceed four calendar months.
- CLAUSE 24. special General Meetings shall be called whenever deemed necessary by the Committee or upon a requisition signed not/.....

\_\_\_\_\_  


meeting during the said month the Committee may hold the Annual General Meeting at such earlier or later date as may be deemed expedient.

(11) When the quarterly meeting of the Union is due in the month of September the Annual General Meeting may be deemed to also be the quarterly meeting for the purpose Clause 23.

**CLAUSe 31.** The Annual General Meeting shall in addition to any other business receive and consider the Committee's annual reports of activities, the annual balance sheet and income and expenditure account together with the Auditor's statement and elect the following Officers from amongst the members present or any other member of the Union who has by writing expressed his willingness to serve on any office:

(1) A Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and not less than six Committee Members whose number may, subject to the said minima, be increased or reduced at any ordinary General Meeting of members by recall or co-option or any other method provided for in this Constitution.

(11) A co-opted Committee member shall hold office until the first ensuing Annual General Meeting and be eligible for re-election.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**CLAUSe 32.** (1) The management of the affairs of the Union between General Meetings shall be vested in the Committee.

(11) The Committee shall be elected and assume office immediately after each Annual General Meeting and hold office until such time as it is replaced by the next Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting as provided in Clause 24; and shall be eligible for re-election.

**CLAUSe 33.** Vacancies of the Committee shall be filled by the first ensuing General Meeting of the Union, provided that the Committee shall have authority to fill any vacancy occurring between General Meetings in which case it shall be submitted to the first ensuing General Meeting for confirmation or otherwise, provided further that:

(1) Where a vacancy for a Committee member occurs and the number of Committee members, whether co-opted or otherwise, is not less than the minimum laid down in Clause 31 (1), the General Meeting may determine that such vacancy shall not be filled.



(11) A suspension from office shall not be deemed to have created a vacancy for the purpose of this Clause.

(111) An Officer appointed to fill a vacancy shall hold office for the unexpired portion of the period of office of his predecessor.

**CLAUSe 34.** An Officer, including a shop steward, shall vacate his office in any one of the following circumstances:-

(1) On tendering his resignation in writing or upon the final expulsion or suspension from membership of the Union.

(11) /.....

(ii) On suspension for a specified period from the Committee by that body which shall come into force immediately but be subject to confirmation by the first ensuing General Meeting of members and shall not be deemed to imply his automatic removal from any other office.

(iii) On absconding himself without reasonable excuse or without the prior permission of the Committee from three consecutive meetings of the Union which he is liable to attend, including General Meetings.

(iv) On suspension from office for a specified period or on being recalled by a resolution of a General Meeting (which shall not apply to any Shop Steward as such) against which decision there shall be no appeal save to the first ensuing General Meeting.

(v) On resigning from office by giving one month's notice in writing to that effect.

(vi) On ceasing to be in good standing.

(vii) On suspension from office for a specified period or on being recalled by a resolution of factory or department meeting, in the case of a Shop Steward, which decision shall not be altered save by another factory or department meeting of the members concerned.

CLAUSE 35. (i) The Committee shall meet at least once a month and the interval between the Committee meetings shall not exceed six weeks.

(ii) Special Meetings of the Committee shall be called by the Chairman whenever he deems it advisable or upon a requisition signed not by less than five members of the said Committee in good standing.

CLAUSE 36. Written notice of every meeting of the Committee showing date, time, place and business to be transacted thereat shall be given to all members of the Committee in good standing by the Chairman or Secretary so as to reach them not later than four days before the date of any Committee Meeting, provided that in the case of Special Committee Meetings such shorter notice as may be decided by the Chairman may be given.



CLAUSE 37. At any meeting of the Committee the minutes of the last preceding meeting shall be read and after confirmation and amendment, if any, signed by the presiding officer.

CLAUSE 38. A quorum for Committee meetings shall be five members in good standing which may include the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The provisions of Clause 26 shall, mutatis mutandis, apply in regard to the absence of a quorum at any meeting of the Committee.

#### FUNCTIONS OF OFFICERS

CLAUSE 39. The duties and obligations of Officers and the Committee shall in addition to such other duties as are imposed by this Constitution be as follows:

(A)/.....

(A) The Officers of the Union shall be responsible to the General Meeting for their acts and decisions and may be recalled by that body for any reason without previous notice. They shall strictly adhere to the mandates and instructions given them by a General Meeting and any decision of the Committee which is in conflict with a decision of a General Meeting (unless it has been suspended by a ballot in which case the latter decision shall operate in the same way) shall have no force or effect.

(B) Matters arising between General Meetings which do not form the subject of a previous decision by the General Meeting shall be subject to a General Meeting before acted upon by any Officer, provided that in the event of matters arising requiring urgent decision such matters may be dealt with by the Committee whose decision shall be binding on the Officers until the first ensuing General Meeting of members where the matters shall be reported for confirmation or otherwise.

(C) Notwithstanding any powers vested in the Committee by this Constitution the Committee shall in exercising the powers and authority be subject to the direction and control of the General Meeting of members.

(D) The Chairman shall:

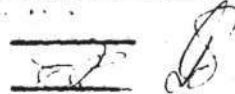
- (i) Preside at all meetings at which he is present
- (ii) Convene meetings
- (iii) Enforce observance of the Constitution
- (iv) Sign the minutes of meetings after confirmation
- (v) Sign cheques or withdrawal forms on the account of the Union
- (vi) Generally exercise supervision over the affairs of the Union and perform the duties that by usage and custom pertain to his office.

(E) The Vice-Chairman shall exercise the powers and perform the duties of the Chairman if for any reason the latter is absent or is temporarily or permanently unable to perform his duties and shall continue to do so until the Chairman is able to resume his duties or until the next election, as the case may be.

(F) The Secretary shall:

- (i) Issue notices for meetings
- (ii) Keep such books and records as may be prescribed by the Committee
- (iii) Receive requisitions for meetings
- (iv) Conduct all correspondence of the Union
- (v) Keep copies of letters despatched and letters received and at each meeting of the Committee read all correspondence that has taken place since the previous meeting.

(vi)/.....



- (vi) Attend all meetings of the Union and record the minutes of the proceedings which shall include the resolutions moved and names of their proposers and seconders and the decisions thereon.
- (vii) Keep a record of all Officers showing their names and residential addresses and any alterations thereof.
- (viii) Keep a register of members showing in respect of each member the various particulars specified in Clause 10
- (ix) Prepare the annual report of activities of the Union for presentation to the Committee and the Annual General Meeting.
- (G) The Treasurer shall be responsible for:
  - (i) Keeping a cash book, petty cash book and such other books and accounts as may be prescribed by the Committee.
  - (ii) Receiving subscriptions, levies, fines and any other moneys on behalf of the Union.
  - (iii) Issuing official receipts for all moneys received and deposit same to a banking or similar account within five days of receipt.
  - (iv) Making payments on behalf of the Union and obtaining receipts for same.
  - (v) Submitting reports in regard to the financial position of the Union at least once every month to the Committee and once every quarter to the General Meeting
  - (vi) Preparing or causing to be prepared a Balance sheet and Income and Expenditure Account in respect of each financial year which balance sheet and Income and Expenditure Account shall be audited by a Chartered Accountant (S. A.) or by two persons appointed by the Committee (who shall not be members of that body) and together with the Auditor's report thereon be submitted to the Committee and the Annual General Meeting for adoption.
- (H) In the event of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman being unable temporarily or permanently to perform their duties the Committee shall elect one of its members to act as Chairman. An acting chairman shall hold office until the Chairman or Vice-Chairman are able to resume their duties or until the next election, as the case may be, and shall perform the same functions as the Chairman.
- (I) In the event of a vacancy occurring in the offices of the Secretary or Treasurer their respective duties shall be performed by the Chairman or his acting Deputy until such time as the matter is decided in terms of Clause 31, provided that the Chairman may delegate such functions to any other Officer of the Union.

CLAUSE 40. Subject to the provisions of Clause 39 sub-clause (C) the Committee shall in addition to such other powers as are vested in it in terms of this Constitution have the power to do

one/..... ..

— *[Signature]*

one or more of the following things on behalf of the Union:

(A) To admit or refuse to admit persons to membership of the Union and to suspend, fine or expel any member and accept resignations from members.

(B) To appoint sub-committees.

(C) To open and operate on a banking or similar account in the name of the Union.

(D) To employ any Officer or other person as Organiser or any other employee for the efficient administration of its business and to determine the conditions of their employment.

(E) To grant a remuneration to any Officer and to determine the conditions of such remuneration.

(F) To exempt any member from the payment of subscriptions for a specified period and to determine the conditions of such exemption.

(G) To refer any matter which is the subject of discussion by the Union to a ballot of members.

(H) To acquire either by purchase or otherwise any movable or immovable property on behalf of the Union and to sell, let or mortgage or otherwise deal with or dispose of any property belonging to the Union, provided that no immovable property shall be acquired, sold, mortgaged, let or leased without the authority of the General Meeting first having been obtained.

(I) To co-opt any Shop Steward to the Committee and fill any vacancy of an Officer in terms of Clause 39 (H).

(J) To do such other things not inconsistent with this Constitution as in the opinion of the Committee may appear to be in the interests of members.

At

CLAUSE 41. (1) Any meetings of sub-committees appointed in terms of Clause 40 (J) the Secretary shall take a record of proceedings and submit same to the first ensuing meeting of the Committee for confirmation or otherwise and which shall be incorporated in the minutes of such Committee Meeting.

(11) The decisions of subcommittees shall only be effective if approved of by the Committee. They may, however, exercise such authority and shall perform such duties as may be specifically delegated to them by the Committee from time to time.

#### FINANCE

CLAUSE 42. All subscriptions, levies, fines or any other moneys paid on behalf of the Union or in connexion with any of the Union's activities, functions or undertakings shall be receipted and deposited within five days of receipt to the accounts of the Union. No payments shall be made out of moneys received by the Union before same have been deposited to an account as herein provided.

CLAUSE 43/.....

CLAUSE 42. (i) All payments from Union funds, except those specifically provided for in this Constitution and petty cash payments, shall have the prior consent of the Committee.

(ii) Payments on behalf of the Union shall be effected by cheque or withdrawal form which shall be signed by the Chairman and the Treasurer provided that any payments of less than £1 (one pound) may be made from petty cash in which case provisions of Clause 44 shall apply

CLAUSE 43. (i) Funds required for petty cash payments shall be provided for by the drawing of an amount by cheque or withdrawal form not exceeding £5 (five pounds) which payments need not have the prior approval of the Committee but shall be reported to the first ensuing meeting of the said Committee for confirmation or otherwise.

(ii) A petty cash book shall be kept by the Treasurer showing the drawings and details of all payments made which shall be placed on the table at each meeting of the Committee and any member of the Committee shall have a right to elicit such further information in connexion with any cash payment as he may deem desirable.

CLAUSE 45. (i) The funds of the Union shall only be applied to the payments of the necessary expenses, the acquisition of property or such other purposes as is connected with the furthering of the objects of the Union.

(ii) If the Committee incur expenditure except as herein provided, including petty cash payments, the members present at the meeting at which such expenditure was agreed to or confirmed shall be jointly and severally liable for refunding the amount in question, provided that no liability shall rest on the members who at the time specifically requested that their disapproval of the incurring or confirming of such expenditure be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

CLAUSE 46. (i) The financial year of the Union shall commence on the first day of August in each year and terminate on the thirty first day of August next year.

(ii) The Annual Balance Sheet and Income and Expenditure Accounts of the Union shall be drawn up and audited in accordance with the provisions of Clause 31 and true copies of the said documents (together with true copies of the Auditor's reports thereon) shall be made available at the Union office for inspection by the members who are in good standing for a period not exceeding one year from the date of the Auditor's report and such members shall be entitled to make copies thereof or take extracts therefrom.

CLAUSE 47. Where any funds are established by the Union for the purpose of providing medical, funeral or other special benefits for members the financial affairs of such funds shall be conducted separately from the other finances of the Union, including operation of separate deposit accounts on behalf of such benefit funds.

#### DISCIPLINE

CLAUSE 48. A member shall ordinarily be subject to the discipline of the Committee who may fine, suspend or expel him as it may deem expedient if:

(1)/.....





(i) He fails within seven days of demand by the Secretary to pay any subscriptions or levies which are more than three months in arrear or any other moneys which are due by him to the Union.

(ii) He infringes any of the terms of this Constitution or acts contrary to any decision of the Union or in a manner which is considered detrimental to the interests of the Union.

CLAUSE 49. A member who is not satisfied with the imposition of a fine, suspension or expulsion from membership of the Union, the imposition of any condition in terms of Clause 48 or with any other decision that may be made by the Committee shall have a right of appeal to the General Meeting of members who may confirm, reverse or vary any act or decision of the Committee.

CLAUSE 50. (i) Notice of any appeal lodged in terms of Clause 49 shall be given in writing to the Secretary within seven days of the receipt in writing by the appellant of the decision appealed against, otherwise the decision shall become final and may in such event only be reversed or reconsidered by the body which last decided the matter.

(ii) Save as otherwise provided for in this Constitution no disciplinary measures shall be enforceable whilst the hearing of an appeal to the General Meeting is still pending.

CLAUSE 51. (i) No member may be disciplined unless he has been afforded an opportunity of stating his case personally at a meeting at which the charge or appeal is considered and he shall also be entitled to call witnesses and employ a legal adviser in support of his case and to solicit support from amongst the members or Officers of the Union in connexion therewith.


(ii) All matters affecting the discipline of the Union shall be conveyed to the member concerned in writing and the matter which any accused member is charged shall be clearly set out in such notice or letter.

(iii) Every accused member shall be given not less than seven days' notice, counting from the time of the arrival of the said notice at the residential address or place of employment of the particular member, of the meeting at which any charge or appeal concerning such member will be considered.

CLAUSE 52. Wherever in this Constitution any provision is made for the imposition of a fine such fine shall not exceed £1 (one pound) in the case of first offence, £2 (two pounds) in the case of a second offence and £5 (five pounds) for any subsequent offence.

CLAUSE 53. Any member in good standing shall have a right to examine the current financial books and records of the Union at all reasonable hours and shall also have access to the names and residential addresses of the Committee members who are holding office at the time.

CLAUSE 54. No officer or employee of the Union shall incur any personal liability/.....



- the date, time of opening and closing of ballot, place, procedure and subject matter of the ballot.
- (C) (1) Two or more scrutineers shall be appointed for each ballot box by the Committee.
- (11) Each voter shall in the presence of the scrutineers be issued with a ballot paper which shall be completed, folded and deposited in the ballot box by the voter.
- (111) Each member shall be entitled to one vote and any member found guilty of a plurality of voting shall be liable for disciplinary action.
- (D) (1) The Secretary shall provide the scrutineers with a list of the members who are entitled to vote and upon a ballot paper being issued to a member a mark shall be placed next to his name indicating that he has voted.
- (11) If the name of a member claiming a vote does not appear on such list he shall be issued with a ballot paper but shall, before depositing it in the ballot box place same in an envelope and write his name and address thereon.
- (111) Before the ballot is counted the Committee shall decide whether the member in question is entitled to a vote or not and in the event of the decision being in the affirmative the envelope shall be opened in the presence of the scrutineers and his ballot paper included amongst the rest before any of them are counted. If the decision is in the negative such ballot paper shall be regarded as spoilt.
- (E) (1) After the conclusion of a ballot the result thereof shall be ascertained with the least possible delay by the scrutineers in the presence of witnesses and made known to the members concerned by the Secretary.
- (11) Any member in good standing shall be entitled to witness the counting of a ballot and the date, time and place fixed for the counting of a ballot shall be made known to the members concerned at least two days in advance.
- (111) All ballot papers, including spoilt papers shall be retained for at least three months during which period any member in good standing may demand a recount.
- (F) Ballot papers shall not be signed or marked in any way apart from the mark required to be made in regarding the vote. Papers bearing any other mark shall be regarded as spoilt and shall not be counted.
- (G) Immediately on the expiration of the time fixed for the recording of votes in any ballot all ballot boxes shall be properly sealed by the scrutineers in the presence of witnesses. If the seal of any ballot box is broken before the counting of such box has commenced the particular ballot papers shall be destroyed and a new ballot taken of the members concerned.
- (H) In the event of a ballot being conducted which directly or indirectly affects the Secretary the duties assigned to him in connexion with the taking of ballots shall be carried on by such other Officer as may be determined by the Committee.

STRIKES/.....

— *RP* *AS*

STRIKES AND LOCK-OUTS

CLAUSE 59. (1) Subject to the provisions of any legislative enactment a strike may be declared by a two thirds majority of the members present at a meeting called for the purpose.

(11) Any strike declared in terms of this Constitution shall be binding on all members.

CLAUSE 60. The power to close a strike shall be vested in the body which declared the particular strike, a two thirds majority being necessary, before any decision to close a strike shall become effective.

CLAUSE 61. (1) On the declaration of any strike a Strike Committee shall be elected by the strikers concerned for the conduct of the affairs of such strike.

(11) All members on strike shall be at the disposal of the Strike Committee for any duties in connexion with such strike that may be required of them. Any member failing except for causes appearing sufficient to the Strike Committee, to carry out the instructions of the said Committee shall forfeit his claim to strike pay and be subject to disciplinary action.

(111) No member on strike shall return to work until authorised to do so by the body declaring the particular strike and any member found working without such authority shall be guilty of a breach of discipline.

CLAUSE 62. (1) Save as provided in Clause 59 the Executive Committee shall take immediate steps to render all possible assistance to members on strike and if necessary, raise funds for the successful prosecution of such strike by means of levies on members who are working, voluntary contributions, appeals to other bodies or any other means.

(11) Every member on strike shall be entitled to an amount of strike pay as may be determined by the Committee in conjunction with the Strike Committee.

CLAUSE 63. A member shall not be entitled to give notice of resignation from membership of the Union whilst a strike or lock-out affecting such member is in progress and any notice so tendered shall have no effect.

GENERAL

CLAUSE 64. No defect in any of the provisions of this Constitution shall render the remaining provisions void and inoperative and in such event the remaining provisions shall be operative and be deemed to be the Constitution. Each provision shall create a right or obligation, as the case may be, independently of the existence of any other provisions.

CLAUSE 65. With the exception of the Secretary and the Treasurer all Officers of the Union shall be members of the Union in good standing at the time of their election to office and shall vacate their office immediately upon ceasing to be members of the Union in good standing.

CLAUSE 66. Whenever in this Constitution any provision or reference is made regarding the issuing of a notice for any meeting of the Union or taking of a vote, making of any decision or election of any Officer at any meeting the following provisions shall apply:

(a)/.....

*[Handwritten initials]*

- (A) (i) The Presiding Officer at any meeting shall have a deliberative vote only.
- (ii) In the event of an equality of voting the question shall lapse but may be re-opened at any time later.
- (B) (i) All matters forming the subject of a vote, including the election of Officers, shall be voted upon by a show of hands or by a secret vote as the members concerned may determine, provided that where any provision exists for the taking of a ballot such ballot shall be taken.
- (ii) Unless otherwise provided in this Constitution all matters shall be decided by the highest vote cast.
- (C) (i) All motions shall be proposed and seconded before voted upon.
- (ii) Members shall be entitled to submit resolutions in their absence in which case the resolutions shall be in writing.
- (D) (i) A candidate for election to any office or post shall be proposed and seconded and shall indicate either orally or in writing his willingness to accept nomination before his name can be submitted to voting.
- (ii) If more candidates than are required are nominated for any office or post the matter shall be decided by the highest vote cast.
- (iii) Members shall be entitled to express their views for or against the election of any candidate before such candidate's name is submitted to voting at any meeting or before any unopposed candidate is declared elected by the Presiding Officer.
- (E) The proceedings of any meeting of the Union shall not be invalidated by reason of the non-receipt by any member of a notice of such meeting, provided that where any member, other than a member who at the time of such meeting was not in good standing, can show to the Committee that he has been wilfully excluded from any meeting which he was entitled to attend, whether through the withholding of any notice or by other act, the proceedings of same shall be set aside and a special meeting convened in its place within four days of the decision being reached by the Committee.

DISSOLUTION

CLAUSE 67. The Union shall be wound up if a resolution to that effect is passed by a unanimous vote at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose or if for any reason the Union is unable to continue to function.

CLAUSE 68. If a resolution as provided for in Clause 67 has been passed or if for any reason the Union is unable to continue to function the following provisions shall apply:

- (A) (i) The last appointed Chairman of the Union or if he is not available the available members of the last appointed Committee shall appoint a Trustee to carry out the winding up.

(ii)/.....

(ii) The Trustee shall not be a member of the Union and shall be paid such fees as may be agreed upon between him and the said members of the Committee.

(iii) The Trustee so appointed shall call upon the last appointed Officers of the Union to deliver to him the Union's books of account showing the Union's assets and liabilities together with a register of members showing for the twelve months prior to the date on which the resolution for winding up was passed or the date as from which the Union was unable to continue to function, as the case may be, (hereinafter referred to as the date of dissolution) the subscriptions paid by each member and his address on the said date.

(B) (i) The Trustee shall take the necessary steps to liquidate the debts of the Union from its unexpended funds and any other moneys realised from any assets of the Union.

(ii) If the said funds and moneys are insufficient to pay all the creditors after the Trustee's fees and expenses of winding up have been paid the order in which the creditors shall be paid shall, subject to the provisions of sub-clause D hereof, be the same as that described in any law for the time being in force relating to the distribution of the assets of an insolvent estate and the Trustee's fees and the expenses of winding up shall rate in order of preference as though he were a Trustee of an insolvent estate and as though the expenses were the cost of sequestration of an insolvent estate.

(C) After the payment of all debts in accordance with the provisions of sub-clause (B) hereof the remaining funds, if any, shall be distributed by the Trustee amongst the members of the Union who were in good standing as at the date of dissolution and each member shall be awarded a share in proportion to his subscriptions actually paid by him in respect of the twelve months immediately preceding the said date.

(D) The liability of members shall for the purpose of this Constitution be limited to the amount of subscriptions due by them to the Union in terms of this Constitution as at the date of dissolution.

#### AMENDMENTS

CLAUSE 69. Any of the provisions of this Constitution may be repealed, replaced, amended or added to by a two thirds majority of members present at an Annual General Meeting. Written notice showing the proposed alterations in full shall be sent to all members not later than seven days before the date of such meeting.

Confirmed this 1st day of September, 1951.

.....*David Lewis*.....CHAIRMAN

.....*Robert J. Swale*.....SECRETARY

INTERIM REPORT BY H.S. BODER ON NEGOTIATIONS  
CONDUCTED ON BEHALF OF THE HOWICK RUBBER  
WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION.

341.

For the purpose of this report it is necessary to give a resumé of events leading up to the present negotiations. In 1951, the Union submitted certain demands on behalf of the members to the Management of the factory at Howick. No acknowledgment to any correspondence was received by the Union. An application for the appointment of a Conciliation Board and arbitration under War Measure No. 145 was then submitted to the Minister of Labour. This application was refused on the grounds that the Union was not representative. In consultation with the Secretary of the Union in April, 1952, I advised him to submit a further application on behalf of the workers in terms of Section 35 (b) of the Industrial Conciliation Act and War Measure No. 145.

This application was submitted in May, 1952. As a result of correspondence received from the Union on the second application, letters supporting the Union's application were sent to the Secretary for Labour. In August, 1952, a letter was sent to Mr. Sage, the Managing Director at Howick, asking him to meet me to discuss the possibility of negotiating on behalf of the workers whilst on my way to Durban on leave. This request was refused.

On the 4th October, 1952, a representative of the Union visited Johannesburg when the latest position was discussed. On the 6th October, 1952, I saw the Secretary for Labour in regard to the second application, advising him of my request to meet Mr. Sage on a previous occasion. Further letters attempting to clarify certain points made in the application were also sent. On the 5th November, 1952, the Secretary for Labour advised me by telephone that he had seen Mr. Sage who was prepared to meet me on the following day to discuss the position and further that he was prepared to meet me along with representatives of the workers to conduct negotiations on their behalf at Pietermaritzburg. These arrangements were confirmed on Thursday the 6th November, 1952.

I then consulted Mr. J.J. Venter, and after reporting the whole matter to him, he agreed that I should proceed to Howick for the purpose stated above. A request was sent to the Secretary of the Union to arrange an Executive meeting for Monday, 10th November, 1952, in the evening. I left Johannesburg on Sunday morning the 11th November, 1952. On Monday morning I visited the Union office but was unable to contact the Secretary who had gone to Durban. In the evening I met the Executive Committee and after discussing the whole matter, they agreed to appoint two from each of the Asiatic, Coloured and African workers as a Negotiating Committee and that I should put up the case, and that for the purpose of the meeting on Friday, the 14th November, the previous demands in which the increases asked for exceeded the determined wages by 75 to 150 per cent. be withdrawn without prejudice to the application made to the Minister of Labour.

I saw Mr. Sage on Tuesday morning at the factory and obtained a list of the present wages paid in the various grades affected. Later, I saw Mr. Morris of the Department of Labour at Pietermaritzburg, when arrangements were made for the meeting to take place at 9.30 a.m. on Friday, the 14th instant in the Department's Board Room. The names of the delegates were then phoned through to Mr. Sage, who agreed to provide transport, pay the wages for the day lost and pay the weekly wage on Thursday night.

On Wednesday morning I went to Durban to see the Divisional Inspector of Labour (Natal) and discussed the position with him. I was unable to meet either Mr. Moir or Mr. Wanless who were both attending a meeting. I was, however, able to see the Union Secretary and informed him of the position to date.

On...../2

On Friday negotiations commenced, Mr. Morris of the Department of Labour acting as Chairman. The following are the amended demands submitted on behalf of the Indian, Coloured and African employees of the South African Rubber Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Howick:-

1. The original demands submitted to the Company are withdrawn. The following amended demands are submitted in place thereof:-
2. Wages.  
An increase of 2d. (twopence) per hour on wages at present paid.
3. Cost-of-living Allowance.  
Cost-of-living allowance of 60 per cent. while the Retail Price Index figure exceeds 1700 points, when the Index figure is below 1700, the cost-of-living allowance determined by War Measure No. 43 of 1942 shall apply.
4. Hours of Work.  
44 hours per week.
5. Annual Leave.  
Two weeks per annum for employees with three years service.  
Three weeks per annum for employees with service in excess of three years.
6. Paid Public Holidays.  
In addition to the present paid Public Holidays, Kruger Day, 10th October.
7. Sick Leave.  
Two weeks sick leave for employees with three years service.  
Three weeks sick leave for employees with more than three years service.
8. Traveller's Driver.  
5s. per night when away from Headquarters.
9. Definitions.  
The provisions of Determination No. 125 shall be deemed to be incorporated in this Agreement to the extent to which they are not inconsistent with the terms of this Agreement.
10. Recognition.  
In the event of the Union becoming registered : The Union shall be the body eligible to conduct negotiations on behalf of the Indian, Coloured and African employees.

**DAWSE**

There were present: Mr. ~~Dawse~~ and an Inspector from the Department, Messrs. Sage, M.J. Dix and A.J. Leak representing the employers and Messrs. D. Sowdon, F. Ross, B. Sauraj, P. Rosem Gonedo, D. Bense and myself representing the employees.

The following is a brief report of the negotiations which lasted three hours:-

1. It was agreed that the original demands as embodied in the application for a Conciliation Board and appointment of an Arbitrator be withdrawn

Amended demands submitted on behalf of the Indian, Coloured and African Employees of the South African Rubber Manufacturing Co. Ltd., Howick.

- (1) The original demands submitted to the Company are withdrawn. The following amended demands are submitted in place thereof.

(2) Wages.

An increase of 2d (twopence) per hour on wages at present paid.

(3) Cost of Living Allowance.

Cost of Living Allowance of 60% while the retail index figure exceeds 1700 points when the retail index figure is below 1700 the cost of living allowance determined by War Measure No. 42 of 1942 shall apply.

(4) Hours of Work.

44 hours per week.

(5) Annual Holiday Leave.

2 Weeks per annum for employees with 3 years service.

3 Weeks per annum for employees with service in excess of 3 years.

(6) Paid Public Holidays.

In addition to the present paid public holidays, Kruger Day, October the 10th.

(7) Sick Leave.

Two weeks sick leave for employees with 3 years service.

Three weeks sick leave for employees with more than three years service.

(8) Travellers Driver.

5/- per night when away from Headquarters.

(9) Definitions.

The provisions of Determination 125 shall be deemed to be incorporated in this Agreement to the extent to which they are not inconsistent with the terms of this Agreement.

(10) Recognition.

In the event of the Union becoming registered.

The Union shall be the body eligible to conduct negotiations on behalf of the Indian, Coloured and African employees.

Results of Meeting held on the 14/11/52 at 9.30 a.m. in the Board Room of the Pietermaritzburg Department of Labour offices.

(Refer to the attached substituted demands).

- (1) It was agreed that the original demands as embodied in the application for a Conciliation Board and appointment of an Arbitrator, be withdrawn for the purpose of the discussions of the Meeting, it being understood that there was no prejudice to applications now before the Minister.
- (2) As the Company desired time in which to investigate the financial implications of demands, numbers (2) and (3) the Management gave an undertaking to reply to same at the next Meeting which would be held on the 1st December, 1952.
- (3) In regard to demand No. 4, the Management indicated that the Company would not be prepared to depart from the provisions of the Determination (No.125).
- (4) In regard to demands numbers (5) and (7) the Company accepted the principle of recognition of long service but could not agree to this recognition in the form proposed. The Management undertook however, to look into the possibility of bringing forward some other proposal.
- (5) The Company was not prepared to agree to the recognition of Kruger Day as a paid holiday, but undertook to investigate the possibility of substituting therefor, one of the present unpaid public holidays.
- (6) As the Company did not employ traveller drivers, demand No. 8 fell away.
- (7) Proposal No. 9 was agreed to.
- (8) The Company was not prepared to recognise the Union after registration, as the only body to conduct negotiations on behalf of the Asiatic, Coloured and African employees and suggested that the non-european employees should follow the example of the european employees and form Works Committees for the purpose of liason with the Management.

employees who have been in the establishment for over ten years. Now, they like other petitioners feel that there is real need for improvements in their wages and other working conditions.

With the above statement I trust that the Hon. the Minister of Labour will give this matter his kind attention and that the conciliation board will be granted as requested. It is proposed that the demands served on Messrs. South African Rubber Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (Howick) form the terms of reference and that each party be represented by three members.

Yours faithfully,

*S. B. Maharaj*  
S. B. MAHARAJ

DULY APPOINTED NEGOTIATOR FOR  
THE PETITIONERS EMPLOYED BY  
MESSRS. SOUTH AFRICAN RUBBER  
MANUFACTURING CO. LTD. (HOWICK)

THE SOUTH AFRICAN RUBBER  
MANUFACTURING CO., LTD.

COPY

348.

P.O. BOX 29, HOWICK  
NATAL

MJD/MVC.

26th November, 1952.

The Assistant Divisional Inspector,  
Department of Labour,  
P.O.Box 856,  
PINETRE MARITIMUS.

Dear Sir,

MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF NON EUROPEAN EMPLOYEES  
OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN RUBBER MANUFACTURING CO., LTD. AND  
THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COMPANY.

X Due consideration has now been given to the implications of the demands submitted at the meeting held on the 14th instant, and I have to advise that this Company is prepared to make the following amendments to the present conditions of employment as laid down in Wage Determination 125 :-

WAGES AND COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCES.

Labourer	Increase	1d per hour over rate as laid down in Wage Determination 125.
Grade 9	"	1½d " " " " " " " "
Grade 8	"	1½d " " " " " " " "
Grade 7	"	1½d " " " " " " " "
Grade 6	"	2d. " " " " " " " "
Grade 5	"	2d " " " " " " " "
Laboratory Assistant	"	5/- per 46 hr. week " " " " "
Chargehand	"	5/- " " " " " " " "
Factory Clerk	"	5/- " " " " " " " "
Watchman	"	3/10 " " " " " " " "
Motor Vehicle Driver	"	3/10 " " " " " " " "

Cost of Living Allowances as per War Measure 43 of 1942 as amended.

PAID PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

To remain as at present, i.e. New Year's Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day and Day of the Covenant, provided that should the Company in any year declare any day(s), in addition to the foregoing,  
a/.....

The Assistant Divisional Inspector  
Department of Labour

-2-

26th November, 1952.

a holiday not more than one of such day(s) shall be a paid holiday.

SICK LEAVE.

To remain as at present, i.e. ten work days in the aggregate during any one year of employment, provided that after 5 years unbroken service, an employee who is absent from work through sickness or accident not caused by his own misconduct, and other than an accident compensable under the Workmen's Compensation Act, shall be granted, in addition to the ten work days sick leave specified in Wage Determination No. 125, additional compassionate sick leave to the extent of (a) the difference between ten work days and the sick leave actually taken during the preceeding year and (b) the difference between ten work days and the sick leave actually taken during the preceeding year-but-one; provided that not more than a total of 20 work days compassionate sick leave will be granted over a cycle of three consecutive years; provided further that a certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner shall be submitted to the Company showing the nature and the duration of the employee's illness in respect of each period of absence for which payment is claimed.

ANNUAL LEAVE.

As a further recognition of service, the Company is prepared to introduce a service bonus as follows :-

In recognition of three years unbroken service with the Company immediately preceeding every period of annual leave, the Company will pay every employee so qualified, a service bonus on the following scale, at the commencement of the aforesaid period of annual leave. For the purpose of this clause, a period of absence through sickness shall be deemed as unbroken service :-

Labourer	£2.0.0.
Grade 9.	2.10.0.
8.	2.15.0.
7.	3.0.0.
6.	3.5.0.
5.	3.10.0.
Laboratory Assistant	4.10.0.
Chargehand	5.10.0.
Factory Clerk	4.10.0.
Watchman	2.10.0.
Motor Driver	4.10.0.

This information is being transmitted to you now, so that it may be passed to Mr. Boyder before the next meeting which is to be held on the 1st December, 1952.

Yours faithfully,

  
GENERAL MANAGER.

The negotiations were continued on 1st Decemler, 1952, to consider the offer made by the employers in reply to the demands submitted on behalf of the employees, i.e.:-

Due consideration has now been given to the implications of the demands submitted at the meeting held on the 14th November, 1952, and I have to advise that this Company is prepared to make the following amendments to the present conditions of employment as laid down in Wage Determination No. 125.

WAGES AND COST-OF-LIVING ALLOWANCES.

Labourer	Increase	ld. per hour	over rate as laid down in Wage Determination No. 125.						
Grade 9	"	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Grade 8	"	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Grade 7	"	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Grade 6	"	2d.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Grade 5	"	2d.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Laboratory Assistant	"	5s. per 46 hr. week			"	"	"	"	"
Chargehand	"	5s.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Factory Clerk	"	5s.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Watchman	"	3/10	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Motor Vehicle Driver	"	3/10	"	"	"	"	"	"	"

Cost-of-living allowances as per War Measure No. 43. of 1942 as amended.

PAID PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

To remain as at present, i.e. New Year's Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day and Day of Covenant, provided that should the Company in any year declare and day(s), in addition to the foregoing a holiday not more than one of such day(s) shall be a paid holiday.

SICK LEAVE.

To remain as at present, i.e. ten work days in the aggregate during any one year of employment, provided that after 3 years unbroken service, an employee who is absent from work through sickness or accident not caused by his own misconduct, and other than an accident compensable under the Workmen's Compensation Act, shall be granted, in addition to the ten work days sick leave specified in Wage Determination No. 125., additional compassionate sick leave to the extent of (a) the difference between ten work days and the sick leave actually taken during the preceeding year and (b) the difference between ten work days and the sick leave actually taken during the preceeding year-but-one; provided that not more than a total of 20 work days compassionate sick leave will be granted over a cycle of three consecutive years; provided further that a certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner shall be submitted to the Company showing the nature and the duration of the employee's illness in respect of each period of absence for which payment is claimed.

ANNUAL LEAVE.

As a further recognition of service, the Company is prepared to introduce a service bonus as follows:-

In recognition of three years unbroken service with the Company immediately preceeding every period of annual leave, the Company will pay every employee so qualified, a service bonus on the following scale, at the commencement of the aforesaid period of annual leave. For the purpose

of this clause, a period of absence through sickness shall be deemed as unbroken service:-

Labourer	£2. 0. 0.
Grade 9	2. 10. 0.
" 8	2. 15. 0.
" 7	3. 0. 0.
" 6	3. 5. 0.
" 5	3. 10. 0.
Laboratory Assistant	4. 10. 0.
Chargehand	3. 10. 0.
Factory Clerk	4. 10. 0.
Watchman	2. 10. 0.
Motor Vehicle Driver	4. 10. 0.

After a meeting lasting nearly three hours, I was not able to obtain an increase on the present wages paid. The Management agreed to introduce the new conditions as from 7th January, 1953, and that the holiday leave bonus would be paid this year to employees who had worked the qualifying period when the works closed for leave this year. A report of the discussions was given by the negotiating Committee to some 1,200 workers at an open-air meeting held on the factory premises on the evening of the 2nd December. After hearing the report of the delegates the workers decided by unanimous vote to accept the employers offer. At an Executive meeting held on Sunday, 30th ultimo, it had been decided that in the event of agreement being arrived at, the application made for a Conciliation Board and the appointment of an Arbitrator under War Measure No. 145 be withdrawn.

The effect of the increases gained are as follows:-

GRADE.	INCREASED WAGE.	INCREASED COLA.	TOTAL INCREASE.	
Chargehand	5 0	1 3	6 3	per week.
Factory Clerk	5 0	2 6	7 6	" "
Grade 5	7 8	1 3	8 11	" "
" 6	7 8	3 6	11 2	" "
" 7	5 9	3 6	9 3	" "
" 8	5 9	1 3	7 0	" "
" 9	5 9	2 9	8 6	" "
Labourer	3 10	6	4 4	" "
Laboratory Assistant	5 0	2 6	7 6	" "
Motor Vehicle Driver	3 10	2 9	6 7	" "

On the 3rd December, 1952 I advised the Department of Labour of the report back meeting's decision and made arrangements for the Secretary of the union to forward letters to the Department advising of the acceptance of the employers' offer and the withdrawal of the application for a Conciliation Board and the appointment of an Arbitrator.

5th December, 1952.

*H. S. Boyder*  
H. S. BOYDER.

JOINT GENERAL SECRETARY.

**APPENDIX 4**

APPENDIXCHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS SINCE THE STRIKE

**30 April 1985** - 970 workers at BTR Sarmcol in Howick go out on strike.

**2 May 1985** - BTR Sarmcol fires the striking workers.

**6 May 1985** - Sarmcol begins to hire scab labour.

**7 May 1985** - Strikers launch boycott of white shops in Howick

**7 May 1985** - Strikers call meeting of Mpophomeni community to ask them not to scab.

**10 May 1985** - Police arrest 5 strikers on charges of intimidation.

**10 May 1985** - Dunlop workers threaten strike action if their management does not put pressure on BTR Sarmcol to reinstate the dismissed workers.

**13 June 1985** - MAWU requests the matter be referred to independent arbitration.

**17 June 1985** - The International Confederation of Free Trade Union launches a campaign against BTR Sarmcol on an international level

**17 June 1985** - Chamber of Industries, the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce and the Afrikaanse Sakekamer issued a joint statement rejecting an appeal from MAWU and FOSATU to intervene in the dispute.

**18 June 1985** - Sarmcol refuses to go to arbitration.

**21 June 1985** - Strikers attempt to stage a demonstration outside BTR Headquarters in Johannesburg.

**21 June 1985** - six houses belonging to 'scabs' are attacked two set alight at Mafakatini.

**23 June 1985** - Mass meeting held in Mpophomeni. Police fire teargas after the meeting.

**23 June 1985** - six huts belonging to 'scabs' are set alight at Mafakathini. Police arrest two strikers.

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**25 June 1985** - Dunlop workers in Durban stage a stoppage asking management to exert pressure on BTR Sarmcol to sign the recognition agreement with MAWU.

**24 June 1985** - Mpophomeni township residents stone bus, killing a scab and a SATS worker at the entrance to Mpophomeni. They then set the bus alight.

**25 June 1985** - Vulindlela Commissioner imposed a 21 day ban on meetings in Mpophomeni.

**26 June 1985** - Archbishop Hurley makes a pastoral visit to Mpophomeni.

**27 June 1985** - Town Clerk requests that workers do not use the Catholic Church in the center of Howick for meetings.

**27 June 1985** - The mayor of Mpophomeni attempts to meet Sarmcol management.

**28 July 1985** - Diakonia telexes Sarmcol management offering to help bring the parties to the negotiating table.

**29 June 1985** - Workers demonstrate in the middle of Pietermaritzburg, hold a meeting at the Edendale Lay Center and march through Imbali.

**30 June 1985** - Stayaway first discussed at FOSATU Regional Congress.

**8 July 1985** - The father of two scabs was stoned to death at Mevana.

**9 July 1985** - MAWU sends telexes to the Natal Chamber of Industries asking them to intervene in the dispute.

**11 July 1985** - Sarmcol strikers invaded the Anglican Synod in Pietermaritzburg.

**11 July 1987** - 5 strikers were convicted of assaulting Mr Doto Sokhela on May 15. They were sentenced to 12 months imprisonment.

**11 July 1985** - nine people appeared in the Howick magistrate's court on a charge of murdering Mr Masikula Ntombela of Mevana.

**11 July 1985** - Workers demonstrate at Anglican Synod in Pietermaritzburg

**16 July 1985** - Police fired teargas at a group of

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strikers who were at the entrance of the Sarmcol factory. They later arrested 37.

**18 July 1985** - Stayaway called in Pietermaritzburg.

**18 July 1985** - The International Metalworkers Federation urged Margaret Thatcher to intervene in the dismissal.

**19 July 1985** - The Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce urged BTR Sarmcol to negotiate with MAWU.

**21 July 1985** - Sneeze powder is dumped on the steps of the Catholic Church in Mpophomeni where the strikers meet.

**23 July 1985** - three men appeared in the Howick magistrates court in connection with a fire that destroyed the home of a 'scab' in Mpophomeni.

**25 July 1985** - Striking Bakers Bread workers in Durban send bread to Mpophomeni.

**5 August 1985** - Meeting between MAWU and the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Industries, the Mayor of Pietermaritzburg, the Afrolaamse Sakekamer and the Interdenominational African Ministers' Association and Municipal officials. Agree to try and get Sarmcol to the negotiating table.

**6 August 1985** - 48 Mpophomeni men appeared in the Howick Magistrate's Court in connection with violence in Mpophomeni.

**Monday** - meeting between MAWU and Sarmcol breaks down.

**15 August 1985** - Boycott of white shops in Pietermaritzburg began.

**24 August 1985** - mass meeting at Edendale Lay Center called in support of boycott and to discuss extending it to include other issues.

**9 September 1985** - MAWU submitted court papers to BTR Sarmcol asking them to refer the matter to the Industrial Court.

**12 September 1985** - Sarmcol refuses to refer the dispute to the Industrial Court.

**19 September 1985** - Delegates from FOSATU and MAWU gave evidence to the United Nations sub-committee of transnational corporations in South Africa.

**November 1985** - SAWCO launched

**14 November 1985** - Sarmcol made representations to the Minister of Manpower not to appoint a conciliation board for the dispute.

**25 December 1985** - Black Christmas demonstration.

**30 January 1986** - Minister of Manpower appoints a Conciliation Board. Conciliation Board meeting failed.

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