

https://dspace.org/

Trade Union Strategy And The Labour Process: Tucsa Trade Unions In The Transport And Building Industries, 1955-1977.

Crankshaw, Owen

2015-01-15
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/16548

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

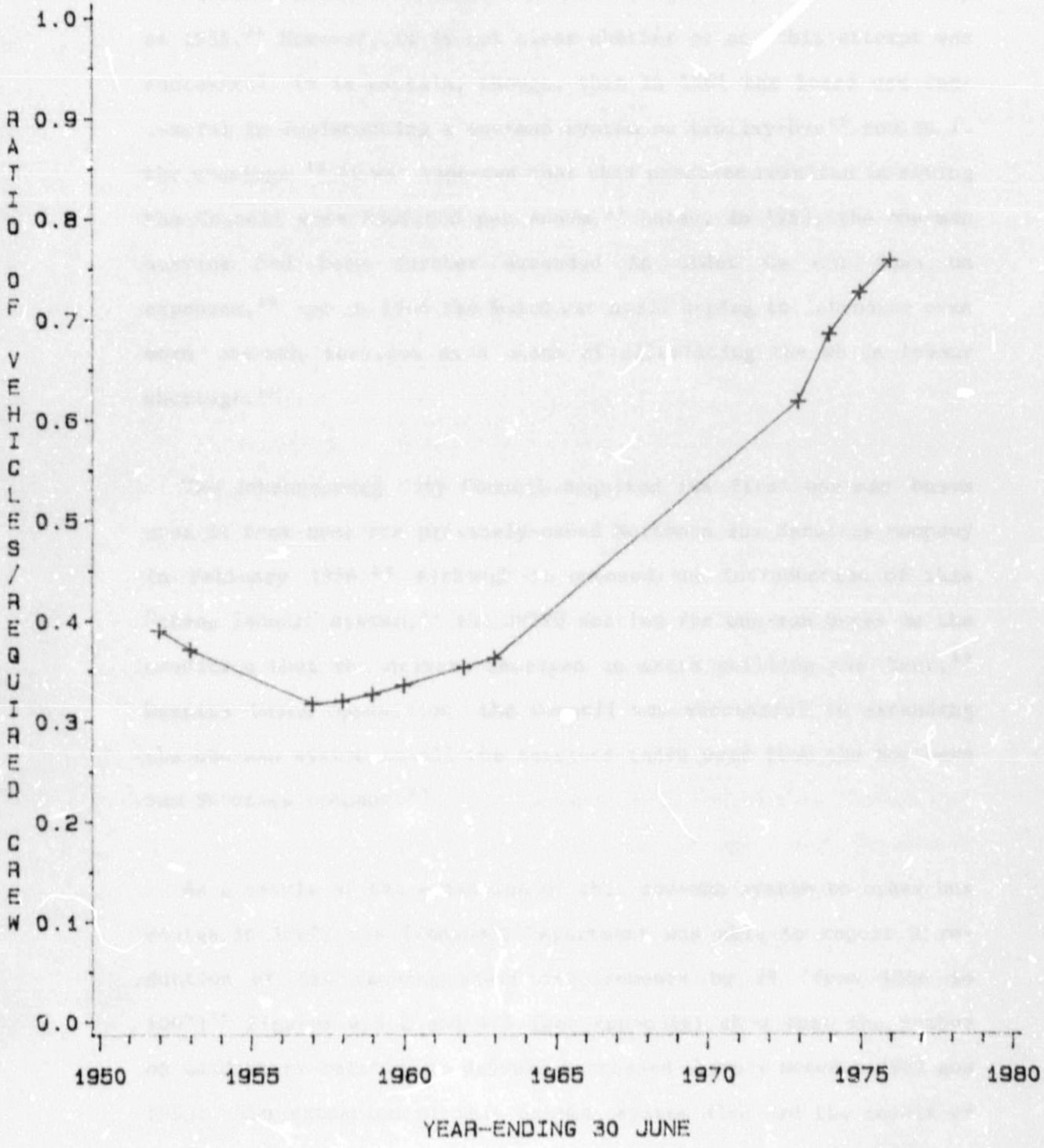
ployers to first de-skill these tasks before they can introduce cheaper labour As a result, the processes of undercutting and the introduction of capital-intensive machinery are not dependent upon each other. During this period employers were able to significantly reduce their labour requirements through the introduction of labour-saving technology which virtually eliminated the task of bus conducting (Figure 4.2). This period also saw the large-scale introduction of cheaper coloured and African labour (Figure 4.1).

3. The Introduction of Labour-saving Technology

At face value, the tasks of bus driving and conducting do not appear to be at all amenable to the introduction of labour-saving technology. Indeed, this was the opinion of the Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union (JMTWU) and the Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (T&OWU) when they declined to accept an invitation to attend a conference on the subject of automation in 1956.[12] However, only eighteen years later, the required number of running staff per vehicle in the Transport Department of the Johannesburg City Council had halved from 2.6 to 1.3. This is clearly demonstrated by Figure 4.3.1 which shows how the ratio of vehicles over the required number of employees increased during this period from 0.37 to 76. This development was a direct result of the introduction of labour-saving technology by the City Council. The effect of this, as the JMTWU itself noted, was to almost halve the membership and therefore the income of the Union (Table 4.4).[13]

FIGURE 4.3.1

Capital Intensity in the Transport Department,
Johannesburg City Council, 1952-1976



SOURCE:
See Table 4.3 (Appendix)

3.1 The Introduction of One-man, Single-decker Buses

The Transport Management Board of the Durban City Council began to initiate moves to introduce one-man single-decker buses as early as 1955.[14] However, it is not clear whether or not this attempt was successful. It is certain, though, that in 1961 the Board was successful in implementing a one-man system on trolley-bus[15] routes in the evenings.[16] It was reported that this practice resulted in saving the Council some R300,000 per annum.[17] Later, in 1963, the one-man service had been further extended in order to cut down on expenses,[18] and in 1966 the Board was still hoping to introduce even more one-man services as a means of alleviating the white labour shortage.[19]

The Johannesburg City Council acquired its first one-man buses when it took over the privately-owned Northern Bus Services company in February 1956.[20] Although it opposed the introduction of this "cheap labour" system,[21] the JMTWU settled for one-man buses on the condition that the drivers received an extra shilling per hour.[22] Despite Union opposition, the Council was successful in extending the one-man system to all the services taken over from the Northern Bus Services company.[23]

As a result of the extension of this one-man system to other bus routes in 1962, the Transport Department was able to report a reduction of the running staff requirements by 79 (from 1086 to 1007)[24] Figures 4.3.2 and 4.5 (see Appendix) show that the number of conductors relative to drivers decreased sharply between 1961 and 1962. The extension of this one-man system also had the result of reducing the labour costs of the City Council by an estimated R99,000.[25] Later, in August 1965, the introduction of one-man buses

on a number of other services and on weekends helped to alleviate the running staff shortage.[26]

3.2 The Introduction of One-man, Double-decker Buses

The earliest evidence of one-man operation of double-decker buses is to be found in a report on Bloemfontein in 1956.[27] Between 1960 and 1964, the East London City Council converted 5 double-decker buses on the white service to one-man operation.[28] In 1964, in the face of strong opposition from the white East London Municipal Transport Workers' Union (ELMTWU), the City Council intended to purchase a fleet of 7 double-decker buses for conversion to one-man operation.[29]

In September 1966 the Johannesburg City Council began to investigate the possibility of introducing the one-man system in double-decker buses.[30] In November the following year the JMTWU was informed of the Council's intention to purchase 30 new double-decker buses specifically designed for one-man operation, and to convert 33 existing trolley buses for the same purpose.[31] New features and equipment which were expected to make this conversion possible included a periscope and public address system to enable drivers to view and communicate with passengers on the upper deck; separate entrance and exit doors which could close automatically; a simplified fare structure; a coupon system and automatic coupon-cancelling machines.[32] The Union vigorously opposed this move, threatening to declare a dispute with the Council if it proceeded with its plans.[33] With the support of TUCSA, the Union argued that a fleet of faster and more frequent, two-man operated buses would be a better proposition.[34] They argued that one-man double-decker buses were not only unsafe because of the many responsibilities that the driver would have to undertake, but because the driver had to collect fares,

they would also slow down traffic while taking on passengers.[35] Despite this opposition, however, the Council went ahead with its plans.[36] After the new coupon system was introduced in April 1969,[37] the new one-man double-decker buses began operating on the Parkhurst, Greenside and Parkview routes,[38] and were soon extended to the Newlands, Melville and Triomf Services.[39] As a result of these conversions, the Council was able to decrease its required complement of conductors by 60, while only increasing the number of drivers required by six.[40] The net effect was therefore to reduce the running staff shortage by 54,[41] which meant a decrease in the number of cancelled bus trips from 500 to 228 per week in June 1969.[42]

This programme was so successful in reducing the labour shortage that in December 1969 the Council ordered another 55 double-deck and 12 single-deck chassis for conversion to one-man operation.[43] These buses were then introduced on the services to some of Johannesburg's southern suburbs.[44] In July 1971, the Transport Department of the Council was able to report a further reduction of 61 running staff as a result of the use of one-man buses,[45] which no doubt contributed to the decrease in the number of cancelled bus trips after mid-1971. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 (see Appendix) show that the rate of cancelled bus trips increased steadily from about 1966 until 1970, after which it began to decrease until it stabilised in 1972. Over the following year 85 new single-decker buses with push-button automatic transmission were converted for one-man operation.[46] A year later, in July 1973, one-man buses were introduced to more of the southern suburbs of Johannesburg.[47] In July 1974, a number of the north-eastern services were converted to one-man operation, with the result that the staff shortage, already low by now, was reduced by some 50%.[48] Figure 4.8 (see Appendix) demonstrates that the total number of two-man buses in service decreased between 1973 and 1976, while the number of one-man buses increased.

they would also slow down traffic while taking on passengers.[35] Despite this opposition, however, the Council went ahead with its plans.[36] After the new coupon system was introduced in April 1969,[37] the new one-man double-decker buses began operating on the Parkhurst, Greenside and Parkview routes,[38] and were soon extended to the Newlands, Melville and Triomf Services.[39] As a result of these conversions, the Council was able to decrease its required complement of conductors by 60, while only increasing the number of drivers required by six.[40] The net effect was therefore to reduce the running staff shortage by 54,[41] which meant a decrease in the number of cancelled bus trips from 500 to 228 per week in June 1969.[42]

This programme was so successful in reducing the labour shortage that in December 1969 the Council ordered another 55 double-deck and 12 single-deck chassis for conversion to one-man operation.[43] These buses were then introduced on the services to some of Johannesburg's southern suburbs.[44] In July 1971, the Transport Department of the Council was able to report a further reduction of 61 running staff as a result of the use of one-man buses,[45] which no doubt contributed to the decrease in the number of cancelled bus trips after mid-1971. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 (see Appendix) show that the rate of cancelled bus trips increased steadily from about 1966 until 1970, after which it began to decrease until it stabilised in 1972. Over the following year 85 new single-decker buses with push-button automatic transmission were converted for one-man operation.[46] A year later, in July 1973, one-man buses were introduced to more of the southern suburbs of Johannesburg.[47] In July 1974, a number of the north-eastern services were converted to one-man operation, with the result that the staff shortage, already low by now, was reduced by some 50%.[48] Figure 4.8 (see Appendix) demonstrates that the total number of two-man buses in service decreased between 1973 and 1976, while the number of one-man buses increased.

During the sixties and seventies, employers were therefore able to restructure the tasks of bus driving and conducting to their advantage. This response to the shortage of labour was also a major defeat for the unions, since it meant not only a relative reduction in the size of the workforce, but also intensified the work of bus driving.

4. Undercutting by African Labour

Another method whereby management was able to alleviate the shortage of white labour while simultaneously decreasing the wage bill, was through the employment of African bus crews at lower rates of pay on African bus routes. Evidence to the fact that white bus crews preferred not to work on the African services,[47] and the fact that the employment of each race group in its prescribed group area was consistent with State policy, were probably the reasons why transport employers began to replace white labour in this manner. Indeed, this was the pattern adopted by the municipalities of Durban and Johannesburg.

4.1 The Durban Municipal Transport Employees' Union

The Transport Management Board of the Durban City Council began to investigate the employment of African crew as early as 1953,[50] and by May 1955, despite opposition from the Durban Municipal Transport Employees' Union (DMTEU),[51] had succeeded in replacing white crews on the African services with cheaper African labour.[52]

In the same year, the Durban City Council made a decision to replace 60 white truck drivers in the Cleansing Department[53] with African labour at lower rates of pay.[54] This move appears to have

been prompted by the inefficiency resulting from the 50% annual turnover of white drivers,[55] and also by the fact that the Council could save 20,000 pounds per annum if it employed cheaper African labour.[56] In response the DMTEU declared a dispute with the Council on the grounds that the employment of African labour would mean an alteration of the conditions of employment of the white drivers.[57] On arbitration, however, the Council was granted permission to employ African labour subject to certain conditions designed to safeguard the interests of the white drivers.[58] Later, in submitting evidence to the Industrial Tribunal which subsequently recommended that the work of truck driving in the Cleansing Department be reserved for whites, the DMTEU made no reference to the rate for the job as a strategy to protect the interests of its members. From the outset, the Union insisted that their jobs be reserved for whites only,[59] and finally won the battle against the Council when the Minister gazetted Work Reservation Determination No.2 in May 1958. This Determination reserved the work of truck driving in the Cleansing Department of the Durban Municipal Undertaking for whites only for a period of 5 years.[60]

The job reservation policy of the DMTEU had obvious implications for its relationship with TUCSA. During its fight to prevent the employment of Africans on African bus routes, the Union's requests for assistance from TUCSA were met with the demand that the DMTEU clarify its position on African unions before assistance could be offered.[61] This difference in trade union strategy was quite likely the reason why, after changing its scope of registration to specifically include whites only,[62] the DMTEU disaffiliated from TUCSA in 1960.[63] These tensions between the DMTEU and TUCSA presaged the conflict that emerged between TUCSA and the transport unions in 1968.

4.2 The Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union

The first attempt by the Johannesburg City Council to employ cheaper labour in the Tramways Department began in June 1956. Arguing that the Department had recently increased the annual loss on the African bus service from 9,000 to 14,000 pounds because of wage increases for white crews,[64] and that the employment of African crews would save some 40,000 pounds annually, the Council began to investigate the employment of African crews on African bus routes.[65] This move would release about 100 white running staff for duties on the white transport services, where the shortage had reached acute proportions.[66]

Hoping that State support for this move would prevent the JMTWU from taking action, the City Council applied to the Minister of Labour for the authority to employ African labour in terms of Section 77 of the Industrial Conciliation Act (No.28 of 1956) on the grounds that the African bus crews would be employed in the service of an African area.[67] The response of the JMTWU was to insist on the rate for the job[68] for African workers.

> "We shall fight this move to the last man...There must be no wage differentiation for the same work according to the colour of the skin."[69]

However, this strategy of demanding the rate for the job was often conflated with its racially exclusive consequences. For example, at a meeting of the General Council it was resolved

> "[t]hat authority be given to the Executive Committee that the Union take every possible step under the Industrial Conciliation Act to ensure that non-Europeans were kept out of the Transport Department [of the Johannesburg City Council]"[70]

And also that the Minister of Labour

> "...should...be asked to take action in terms of Section 77 of the Act 28/1956 which empowers him to reserve certain work in a specified area for persons of a specified race."[71]

As a result of this call by the Union, a hearing of the Industrial Tribunal was held in June 1958 to establish whether or not an investigation should be held.[72] Submitting evidence to the Industrial Tribunal the JMTWU argued that while in fact Section 77 of the Industrial Conciliation Act was designed to prevent inter-racial competition, the Council was invoking this section to achieve the opposite effect by introducing inter-racial competition where none had previously existed.[73] The Industrial Tribunal rejected the Council's suggestion of a job reservation, and instead recommended that the Council negotiate further with the Union.[74] As a result, the Council pressed ahead with its plans to introduce African crews on the African service.[75] In response, the Union threatened to request the State to reserve the work of municipal drivers and conductors for whites only.[76] In the face of this opposition from the Union, the fear of an unfavorable job reservation determination and expected opposition from the National Transportation Board, the City Council abandoned its plans to introduce African crews in October 1959.[77]

During negotiations with the Union for a new agreement in mid-1963, the Council offered separate facilities for African crew if the Union permitted their employment at lower rates of pay.[78] The Union insisted however, on both segregation and rate for the job as conditions for the employment of African bus crews.[79] Following a severe shortage of running staff in February 1964 (Figure 4.6),[80] the City Council voted to push ahead with the plans to employ African bus crews on the African transport service.[81] Again, the Union demanded that the Council pay African crews at the same rate as white crews,[82] and was supported in this demand by TUCSA.[83] Under pressure from the Union, the Council postponed this decision in late February.[84] By the end of March, however, the Council had made the Union a new offer: Improved wages for white staff in exchange for

the employment of African crews on the African services at lower rates of pay.[85] In the face of this "very good offer",[86] Union support for the rate for the job collapsed[87] and the Council's offer was accepted:[88]

> "Mr P D. Coetzee said that the offer from the Council was practically the same as the demands submitted by the Union, and members should realise that the Council would eventually hand over the Native services to the Natives, even without the consent of the Union, and we would have achieved nothing."[89]

By June 1964 African crews had taken over the African diesel bus services, and and by September that same year African crews were employed on the African trolley bus service.[90] As a result, some 60 white drivers and conductors were released for service on white and coloured bus routes, and the shortage of staff on these services was thereby alleviated.[91] One year later there were as many as 111 African drivers and conductors in employment on the African service.[92]

4.3 The Organisation of African Workers

With financial assistance from TUCSA,[93] the Motor Transport Workers' Union (MTWU) began organising African and coloured transport workers throughout the country during the mid 1960s.[94] This was done under the auspices of the African Transport Workers' Union (ATWU).[95] Although there is no evidence that the JMTWU was involved in organising the ATWU until 1974,[96] the fact that there were proposals to merge the MTWU and JMTWU in 1966[97] suggests that these unions were already co-operating in the organisation of African transport workers. The extent to which the transport unions were vulnerable to right-wing trade unionism is demonstrated by a conservative break-away from the MTWU in 1966 as a direct result of the Union's involvement with the ATWU.[98] The vulnerability of the MTWU and the JMTWU to right-wing attacks as a result of their role in the organisation of the ATWU would have contributed to their eagerness

to distance themselves from TUCSA's high-profile clash with the Minister of Labour in 1967 over this very issue. The MTWU[99] and JMTWU[100] were among the first to disaffiliate from TUCSA because of its policy of organising African unions. As the General Secretary and the President of the Union noted in their Annual Report:

> "You will recall that newspaper statements were made and that the Transport Workers' Union was much in the forefront, which resulted in all Transport Unions breaking away from TUCSA followed by other Unions."[101]

By 1974, however, with the emergence of independent African trade union militancy, TUCSA affiliates once again came around to supporting the organisation of African unions. In 1973, the membership of the JMTWU had already registered their support for the policy of organising African unions.[102] This time however, the rationale for this strategy had changed from one of economic necessity[103] to one of a more political nature. Speaking to the resolution,

> "Mr. Erasmus said that the African workers had become virgin soil for the left wing intellectuals and if we did not extend our hand to them it would be to our detriment. If the rank and file were sincere and true South Africans they could only support the organising of African workers."[104]

This decision resulted in a renewed interest by the JMTWU in the organisation of the ATWU,[105] which appears to have collapsed in the late sixties.[106]

5. The Employment of Coloured and Female Labour

The employment of coloured and female labour was another means by which management was able to overcome the white labour shortage. Although employers were able to introduce coloured and female labour into the workforce, it was not at rates of pay which undercut white male labour. In contrast to their failure with respect to African workers, the transport unions in Cape Town and Johannesburg secured the rate for the job for coloured and female workers.

5.1 The Durban Municipal Transport Employees' Union

The Transport Management Board of the Durban City Council began taking steps in the mid-sixties to employ coloured and Indian bus crews on white routes. The Council's argument was that the high turnover[107] and ongoing shortage[108] of running staff (drivers and conductors) left them with no alternative but to employ coloured and Indian bus crews.[109] It was only in the mid-seventies, however, that the Council was finally successful in achieving its goal. The DMTEU finally agreed to the employment of Indian and coloured bus crew on white routes on the condition that it received closed shop facilities for its white members.[110] As a result, 143 Indian and coloured workers were employed as bus, truck and tractor drivers, and another 90 were employed on the white bus service.[111]

In defence of its members' interests, the DMTEU did not waver from its commitment to the Government's policy of job reservation. In 1965, when the threat of undercutting by coloured and Indian workers first emerged, the Union immediately sought protection from the Minister of Labour.[112] By this stage, the DMTEU had already relinquished its legal right to recruit coloured and Indian members by restricting its scope of registration to whites only. Under the Industrial Conciliation Act (No.28 of 1956), no new applications for registration by mixed unions was permitted. Later, once the decision to employ coloured and Indian workers had been made, the Union specifically declined to bargain for higher wages on behalf of the coloured and Indian workers.[113]

5.2 The Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union

Following the sharp increase in early 1969 of the number of cancelled trips on the white bus service, the Johannesburg City Council began to press for the employment of coloured drivers on white bus routes.[114] Unless the Union could find an immediate solution to the shortage, the Council argued, they would be forced to introduce coloured crews.[115]

Although the Council had stated its intention to pay coloured workers at white rates of pay, the Union would not accept this offer until the Council first implemented this policy in other municipal departments where coloured workers were paid less than their white counterparts.[116] Again however, the Union conflated the demand of the rate for the job with that of racial exclusion when it advocated a country-wide recruiting campaign "with a view to keeping the Service 'white'".[117] In addition, the General Secretary of the Union also used an argument popular with the right-wing trade union movement when he reported to the Industrial Tribunal that "Cape Town bus drivers are the worst paid in South Africa because they have Coloured drivers".[118]

Why is it that these racist arguments and strategies emerged in the context of a union policy of non-racialism and rate for the job as the best method of preventing undercutting? The argument which needs to be reiterated here is that, from the point of view of the union members, coloured labour is equal to cheap labour. Both the strategy of organising coloured workers and of demanding that they are paid at the same rate as white workers and that of excluding coloured workers from employment, achieve the same result; they are both attempts to prevent undercutting. In other words, trade unions which represent semi-skilled workers are not structurally bound to

either open or closed forms of trade unionism. Where union members have no skill with which to bargain, the strategy of exclusion on racial grounds becomes a very appealing option. This is particularly the case when such a strategy is reinforced by a racist ideology. That such racism was prevalent among the members of the JMTWU is clear from their own evidence submitted to the Industrial Tribunal in 1969.[119] Giving evidence to the Tribunal, an inspector in the Transport Department said that "up to 90 percent of the transport employees have said that they will not work with Coloureds".[120] It was these attitudes which probably lay behind the Union's demand that "complete segregation of the races be implemented" within the Council's Transport Department.[121]

In mid-1969, at the hearings of the Industrial Tribunal called by the Minister of Labour in response to the Council's request for permission to employ coloured drivers,[122] the Union rejected the Council's new offer which required a number of concessions from the Union.[123] In return for not employing coloured crew on white bus routes, and providing segregated facilities, the Council requested that the Union accept the employment of coloured crew on the coloured and Indian bus routes, and also as shunters, servicemen and attendants; the lifting of Union restrictions on overtime and different salary scales for drivers and conductors.[124] In November 1969, however, the Union finally accepted this offer, on the condition that overtime and part-time wages were increased, and that a joint committee of Union and Council representatives was established to investigate staff complaints.[125] As a result, the Council gave the go-ahead for the employment of coloured running staff on the coloured and Indian bus routes.[126] However, when the Council's earlier request[127] to the Minister of Labour for permission to employ coloured crew was denied,[128] these plans were shelved and alternative methods of resolving the shortage were investigated. These included the

introduction of a shorter working week, higher overtime rates and the recruitment of foreign bus drivers.[129]

Despite press releases by the Council in August 1971 stating their intention to employ coloured bus crew on coloured bus routes and shunting operations in bus sheds,[130] it appears that these workers were confined to shunting operations until February the next year when they began to operate the coloured and Indian bus routes to Crown Mines and Newlands.[131] By December 1971, the Union had accepted at least 70 coloured members[132] in accordance with its closed shop agreement[133] with the City Council (Table 4.4). So, despite the racist [illegible] members, the union leadership was able to ensure that coloured crew were not only paid at the same rate as white workers, but that they were also members of the Union.

During this period the Council also began to demand that white women conductresses be employed on the white transport service.[135] The response of the Union was varied. Initially having no objections to the employment of women provided that they were paid at the rate for the job,[136] the Union later agreed at a General Council Meeting "that conducting a public passenger vehicle was not a fit and proper occupation for a woman".[137] This position was further rationalised in terms of the fact that because conductresses would not be required to work on the African services, their conditions of employment would be better than other members.[138] Despite this resistance the Council went ahead with its plans,[139] and by March 1964 twenty conductresses were employed by the Council[140] and were also, for the first time, members of the Union.[141] By 1968, their number had increased to 72.[142]

Why is it that the State did not reserve the work of bus driving and conducting in the Johannesburg Municipality for whites only? On

two occasions, in 1958 and 1969, the Minister of Labour called for an Industrial Tribunal following requests by the Johannesburg City Council for permission to employ African[143] and coloured labour.[144] However, on both occasions, the Council's request for a work reservation was turned down.[145] Although it was unusual to find a management body rather than a trade union calling for a work reservation determination, and this no doubt influenced the Minister's decision, the reservation of jobs on a ratio basis for white and coloured workers would have been a straightforward solution to the labour shortage. An explanation of the Government's reluctance to introduce job reservation can be found in the unusual juxtaposition of political forces in Johannesburg in the late sixties.[146] By 1969 the shortage of white bus drivers and conductors had resulted in the severe disruption of the white bus service, as evidenced by Figure 4.6 (see Appendix). Since this inconvenience to certain sections of the white public was seen as a direct result of Government policy, it had become a politically charged issue. With a general election around the corner, the United Party-controlled City Council was eager to force the Nationalist Government to take a position on the matter. Whether the Government implemented job reservation or whether it allowed the employment of coloured bus crew, it would have exposed itself to damaging criticism from either the conservative or liberal political opposition. If the State chose the former option, the United Party could have criticised it for complicating the solution to the transport problem, and if it chose the latter, the *Herstigte Nasionale Party* could have made gains by accusing the Government of liberal labour policies.

5.3 The Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (Cape)

As with the other urban centres of South Africa, the Cape Town passenger transport system was characterised by a chronic shortage of white labour from the end of the Second World War.[147] Although by the mid-fifties, the City Tramways Company had already begun to employ coloured labour on predominantly coloured bus routes,[148] in 1957 the Company began to pressurise the Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (Cape) (T&OWU) to allow it even greater freedom to employ coloured bus crew.[149] As a result, an Industrial Tribunal was called, in which the Union requested that the existing number of white jobs be reserved for whites only.[150] Although there is no evidence that the Union supported the policy of the rate for the job, it appears that the Company was already paying coloured employees at white rates of pay.[151] The recommendation of the Industrial Tribunal was that the white and coloured jobs in the City Tramways services be reserved on a percentage basis; 84% for whites and 16% for coloureds.[152] However, this recommendation was only implemented as Work Reservation Determination No.10 in 1961, following a dispute between the Union and the Company over the employment of coloured labour.[153]

A few years later, on the basis that labour shortages[154] were beginning to disrupt services,[155] the City Tramways Company began to negotiate with the Union for a relaxation of the work reservation determination.[156] As a result of these negotiations, the Company applied to the Department of Labour for permission to increase the percentage of coloured busmen from 16% to 24% of the total running staff. Permission was granted in December 1964, and the Company began a recruitment drive to employ an extra 100 coloured bus drivers.[157] Although coloured crew were employed under the same conditions as their white counterparts,[158] the T&OWU still supported the segregation of white and coloured crews.[159] As in the case of the DMTEU,

5.3 The Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (Cape)

As with the other urban centres of South Africa, the Cape Town passenger transport system was characterised by a chronic shortage of white labour from the end of the Second World War.[147] Although by the mid-fifties, the City Tramways Company had already begun to employ coloured labour on predominantly coloured bus routes,[148] in 1957 the Company began to pressurise the Tramway and Omnibus Workers' Union (Cape) (T&OWU) to allow it even greater freedom to employ coloured bus crew.[149] As a result, an Industrial Tribunal was called, in which the Union requested that the existing number of white jobs be reserved for whites only.[150] Although there is no evidence that the Union supported the policy of the rate for the job, it appears that the Company was already paying coloured employees at white rates of pay.[151] The recommendation of the Industrial Tribunal was that the white and coloured jobs in the City Tramways service be reserved on a percentage basis; 84% for whites and 16% for coloureds.[152] However, this recommendation was only implemented as Work Reservation Determination No.10 in 1961, following a dispute between the Union and the Company over the employment of coloured labour.[153]

A few years later, on the basis that labour shortages[154] were beginning to disrupt services,[155] the City Tramways Company began to negotiate with the Union for a relaxation of the work reservation determination.[156] As a result of these negotiations, the Company applied to the Department of Labour for permission to increase the percentage of coloured busmen from 16% to 24% of the total running staff. Permission was granted in December 1964, and the Company began a recruitment drive to employ an extra 100 coloured bus drivers.[157] Although coloured crew were employed under the same conditions as their white counterparts,[158] the T&OWU still supported the segregation of white and coloured crews.[159] As in the case of the DMTEU,

the support of T&OWU for the State policy of job reservation strained their relationship with TUCSA. After the mass disaffiliation from TUCSA in 1968 the T&OWU was the only transport union which was reluctant to re-affiliate to TUCSA.[160]

In 1969, Work Reservation Determination No.10 was further relaxed when the State insisted that the Cape Town bus services be segregated. Ironically, the introduction of separate services for each race group required the employment of an extra 150 running staff, and for this reason the State allowed the further relaxation of this job reservation.[161]

5.4 The Organisation of Coloured Workers

Unlike African workers, coloured workers could belong to both the T&OWU and JMTWU since these unions were registered for a mixed membership before the passage of the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1956. This meant that there were no legal obstacles to the organisation of coloured workers into these mixed unions. The DMTEU[162] and Motor Transport Workers' Union (MTWU)[163] had, however, re-defined their scope of registration to exclude coloureds and Indians. This meant that in the event of these unions organising coloured workers, they would have to do so under the auspices of a separate union.

In the mid-sixties, the MTWU began to finance the organisation of coloured transport workers.[164] Aided financially by TUCSA,[165] this was carried out through the organisational and financial support of the Coloured Transport Workers' Union of South Africa (CTWUSA).[166] For reasons which are unclear, however, the relationship between CTWUSA on the one hand and TUCSA and the JMTWU began to deteriorate after 1967.[167] This relationship finally collapsed

in October 1968 when the South African Council of Transport Workers, with the support of TUCSA, began to organise a new coloured transport workers union in the Transvaal and Western Province; the Transport Workers' Union (Coloured and Asian)(TWU(C+A)).[168] The formation of the TWU(C&A) was a direct threat to both the CTWUSA, which was already "facing an uphill battle",[169] and the coloured Republic Transport Workers' Union (RTWU). The former Union had already been organising in Johannesburg and Durban for about six years, and immediately lodged a complaint with TUCSA.[170] Because the RTWU had not yet had its registration approved by the Minister of Labour, the formation of the TWU(C&A) placed their own registration in jeopardy.[171] Differences between the RTWU and TUCSA mounted when the Union publicly accused the JMTWU of agreeing to the employment of African refuse drivers at lower rates of pay,[172] and the RTWU finally disaffiliated from TUCSA in July 1968.[173]

The explanation for these tensions between TUCSA on the one hand, and RTWU and CTWUSA on the other, can probably be found in different political positions, but there is no evidence to support this. What is clear, however, is that these TUCSA unions did make some attempt during this period to organise coloured workers in order to ensure that they did not undercut the wages of their members. This was achieved through the organisation of separate coloured unions, as well recruiting coloured members into the JMTWU and T&OWU. Table 4.4 demonstrates that the relative number of coloured members of both these unions increased throughout this period. By 1962 the T&OWU had equal numbers of coloured and white members, and by 1976 white members were outnumbered 17.5 to 1. The coloured membership of the JMTWU increased from zero in 1970 to 33% of the total membership in 1977. In contrast to the mixed unions the membership of the DMTEU, since it was restricted to whites only, declined steadily during the

sixties and seventies. In the period 1954 to 1977 the membership of this Union decreased from 650 to 146.

TABLE 4.4

Racial Composition of the Transport Unions, 1954-1977

YEAR	DMTEU	JMTWU				T&OWU			
	white	white	coloured	African	total	white	coloured	African	total
1954	650	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1955	650	1800	-	-	1800	-	-	-	1920
1956	650	1800	-	-	1800	-	-	-	1933
1957	650	1800	-	-	1800	1147	713	-	1860
1958	600	1500	-	-	1500	-	-	-	2004
1959	-	1500	-	-	1500	-	-	-	2004
1960	-	1500	-	-	1500	-	-	-	1910
1961	-	1500	-	-	1500	1146	764	-	1910
1962	-	1500	-	-	1500	955	955	-	1910
1963	-	1500	0	-	1500	-	-	-	2072
1964	-	-	-	-	1500	-	-	-	2072
1965	-	-	-	-	1500	-	-	-	2072
1966	-	-	-	-	1500	-	-	-	2072
1967	-	-	-	-	1500	1056	1016	-	2072
1968	-	-	-	-	1500	-	-	-	2072
1969	-	-	-	-	-	560	2454	-	3054
1970	-	-	-	-	1250	-	-	-	2500
1971	-	-	?	-	1250	-	-	-	2500
1972	-	-	-	-	1250	-	-	-	2500
1973	300	-	-	-	1150	-	-	-	2224
1974	300	905	129	-	1034	190	2300	-	2490
1975	264	866	169	-	1035	159	2213	-	2372
1976	202	799	229	-	1028	126	2212	-	2338
1977	146	795	260		1055	-	-	-	2078

SOURCES:

CPSA, TUCSA, Reports of Proceedings, Annual Conferences 1955-1977 (Ad1.1-1.26), National Executive Committee Reports, Affiliated Unions.

CPSA, TUCSA, Membership Returns 1955-1977 (Ab3)

Hendrie, D. and Kooy, A.(1979), "Trade Unions in South Africa: Some statistics", South African Labour and Development Research Unit, Working Paper No.22, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch.

Lundall, P., Schroeder, I. and Young, G.(1984), "Directory of Trade Unions: A Complete Guide to all South Africa's Trade Unions", South African Labour and Development Research Unit, School of Economics, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch.

JMTWU Records, "Annual Review of the General Secretary, 31/12/71", p.3

6. Summary and Conclusion

In this analysis of the labour process and trade union organisation in the transport industry I have argued that the semi-skilled character of the tasks of bus driving and conducting has created both the conditions for and set the limits to the strategies that have been implemented by employers and trade unions. Because their members were semi-skilled, the transport unions had no control over the training, and therefore the supply, of labour. This meant that employers were able to reduce the skill shortage and their wage bill without restructuring the labour process in order to eliminate the need for skilled training. The introduction of labour-saving technology was therefore a separate attempt by employers to reduce the labour shortage and their wage bill, and did not facilitate the employment of cheaper African and coloured labour.

The semi-skilled character of the labour process also meant that when faced with the threat of undercutting the only alternative form of closed unionism, other than demanding the rate for the job, was a racially exclusive strategy. However, the fact that the unions represented semi-skilled workers also meant that an open form of unionism was an equally feasible method by which they could protect their members against undercutting. All these strategies were practised by the transport unions during the 1960s and 1970s.

The DMTEU pursued a policy of racial exclusion to prevent undercutting by cheap labour. This Union relied on the State to protect its members through reserving their jobs on a racial basis. When faced with undercutting by African labour, the DMTEU also made no attempt to organise these workers in order to control their conditions of employment. Later, when threatened with undercutting by coloured workers, the Union had already relinquished its legal right

to recruit coloured and Indian members, and refused to even bargain on behalf of these workers. The transport unions in Cape Town and Johannesburg however, despite evidence of rank and file racism and sexism, recruited coloured and female members and successfully prevented undercutting by demanding that they received the same rate of pay as their white male members. Although these unions did engage in the organisation of African workers into a parallel transport union, it is clear that opposition from the State, coupled with the politically conservative values of their membership, severely hampered these attempts during the sixties.

During the sixties, when the shortage of white labour resulted in the employment of coloured and African labour in previously white jobs, the mixed transport unions were under pressure from their largely pro-Government membership to reject TUCSA's policy of organising African and coloured workers and instead to rely on the State to reserve their jobs. When TUCSA's policy of organising African workers led to the clash with the Minister of Labour in 1967, the combined threat of undercutting by African and coloured labour as well as the possibility of repressive State action, ensured that the transport unions were amongst those TUCSA unions that voted for the exclusion of African unions from Council in 1968.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1] *Cape Argus* 14 March 1964 and 15 April 1964

City of Johannesburg (1953), *Annual Review of the General Manager of Transport for the Period 1st July, 1952, to 30th June, 1953*, Tramways Department, p.4

Transport 19(2), March/April 1964, "Cape Town Bus Service Under Fire: Union Pinpoints Basic Trouble", pp.17-18

University of the Witwatersrand, Church of the Province of South Africa Archives Collection (hereafter CPSA), Records of the Trade Union Council of South Africa (AH1426)(hereafter TUCSA), Correspondence with Individual Unions, File: JMTWU (Ab4.2.61), "Comments on the Meeting between Representatives of the JMTWU, Mr. R.L. Kraft of TUCSA, and Ove Arup and Partners, Consulting Engineers, Regarding Possible Expert Evidence on the Transport Problems of Johannesburg, held on Thursday, 15th January, 1970" (prepared by R. Kraft of TUCSA for submission as evidence to the Industrial Tribunal).

[2] City of Johannesburg (1973), *Annual Report of the General Manager of Transport for the Three-year Period 1 July 1969 to 30 June 1972*, Transport Department, p.4

See also,
Cape Argus 14 March 1952

[3] City of Johannesburg (1958), *Annual Report of the General Manager of Transport for the Period 1st July, 1957 to 30th June, 1958*, Tramways Department, p.4

City of Johannesburg (1973), *ibid*

CPSA, South African Institute of Race Relations Clippings Collection (hereafter SAIRR), Box 642 (Job Reservation), *Die Transvaler* 6 March 1970, "Waaroor Busmanne Kwaad is"

CPSA, SAIRR, Box 641 (Job Reservation), *Natal Mercury* 6 March 1965, "Non-white Bus Drivers 'Only Alternative'"

CPSA, SAIRR, Box 643 (Job Reservation), *The Star* 24 November 1970, "Bus Service Not Out of Control - Tribunal. Coloured Drivers - 'No Justification'. Full details of Report"

[4] *Cape Argus* 15 April 1964

CPSA, TUCSA, Disputes (Box Ak), File 2 (1957), "Memorandum for Submission to the Industrial Tribunal", T&OWU.

Transport 19(2), March/April 1964, *op cit*, p.17

[5] City of Johannesburg (1973), *op cit*

Transport 19(2), March/April 1964, "Cape Town Bus Service Under Fire: Union Pinpoints Basic Trouble", p.18

[6] City of Johannesburg (1973), *ibid*

[7] *ibid*

[8] *Transport* 19(2), March/April 1964, "Shortage of Bus Drivers: This one failed by two inches!", p.20

[9] CPSA, TUCSA, Correspondence with Individual Unions, File: JMTWU (Ab4.2.61), "Comments on the meeting between representatives of the JMTWU, Mr. R.L. Kraft of TUCSA, and Ove Arup and Partners, Consulting Engineers, regarding possible expert evidence on the transport problems of Johannesburg, held on Thursday, 15th January, 1970" (prepared by R. Kraft of TUCSA)

Author Crankshaw Owen
Name of thesis Trade Union Strategy And The Labour Process: Tucsa Trade Unions In The Transport And Building Industries, 1955-1977. 1987

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg Library website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the Library website.