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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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The 1913 and 1914 White Workers' Strikes

A. O'Quigley

Introduction

The gold mining industry on the Rand began in the 1880's and by 1913 there were 63 mines employing about 21 000 white workers and 200 000 black workers.

Gold, the international money commodity, had a fixed price. This meant there was a certain constraint with regard to the costs of production because increases could not be passed on to the buyers. The gold bearing ore on the Rand was deep lying and of a consistent low grade throughout the Reef. Because of its depth large amounts of capital investment were required for its exploitation. This was provided by finance houses in Europe through whom groups of gold mining companies were controlled. The profitability of the industry was constrained by the fixed price, the low grade of the ore and the need for large scale capital investment. Because of this the industry depended on cheap labour.

The problem of finding and maintaining a supply of cheap labour dominated the policies of the industry. In the early years the great majority of blacks lived in the rural areas subsisting as independent farmers or on white owned land as squatters, share croppers and wage labourers. The long process of detaching black labour from the land to produce for white owned economic enterprises was partly achieved through the implementation of taxes by government which forced peasants to obtain cash. As far as the gold mining industry was concerned in the early years some blacks came voluntarily in order to obtain cash to buy European produced goods such as guns. But increasingly black labour was obtained by recruiters who worked for the gold mining industry. Various means were employed by recruiters to obtain black labour including debt inducement. The gold mining capitalists quickly realised that co-operation between them was necessary to prevent their competition driving up the price of black labour. Centrally controlling recruiting agencies were established which operated throughout Southern Africa. The gold companies also agreed not to pay black labour more than a certain wage. This policy of co-operation was supervised by the Transvaal Chamber of Mines (TCM) a centralised policy making body to which most gold companies affiliated (1). They also eventually realized that the partially proletarianised native of the labour force, which meant that it fluctuated with changes in labour migration patterns, although a headache for managers was actually an advantage for an industry based on cheap labour. It meant that very low wages could be paid because the migrants family and his future were provided for in the rural areas.

The black labour force thus obtained was lacking in any experience of industrial life and was restricted to unskilled work. In order to develop the mines and carry out certain skilled mining operations the gold companies also needed a supply of skilled workers. These were not available in South Africa. Skilled miners from overseas were induced to come to the Witwatersrand because of the relatively high wages. Most of them originated in Britain. Skilled miners tended to be nomadic and some had experience of work in Australia, America and other gold fields throughout the world. These miners brought to South Africa their trade union experience and soon established branches of British craft unions and an autonomous miners union (2). As in Britain the craft unions operated to restrict access to their trade to maintain the scarcity of skills, prevent dilution of

1 See Rick Johnstone "Class, Race and Gold"
2 See Elaine Katz 'A Trade Union Aristocracy' 1976 A.S.I.

labour and keep up its price. The miners union also began as a union of skilled workers. For many years it was very weak perhaps partly because the workers at that time felt unthreatened by dilution and because their rates of pay were relatively high and partly because of their tendency to be nomadic and to see their 'home' as being in Britain where their families probably were. Apart from their tendency to migrate from goldfield to goldfield they were very mobile between mines on the Rand which militated against the development of strong trade unions.

Because of their rates of pay,their momopoly of skills and their resulting bargaining power the TCM was anxious to free themselves from their dependency on the white workers. For many years they refused to recognise trade unions and tried to discourage and weaken them (3). In 1909, partly for strategic reasons, the TCM drew up an agreement with the engine drivers' union. They hoped this would prevent the engine drivers from participating in a white workers' strike. The engine drivers were critical for operations becasue the mining regulations restricted control of machines for hauling men to whites.

As blacks became experienced in gold mining operations the TCM wanted to be able to substitute this labour for the more expensive white workers. Skilled whites were still necessary but where skills could be fragmented blacks could carry out some of the operations. As time passed the 'all-round' skilled miner was gradually replaced by a worker whose only qualification was the possession of a'blasting certificate' (4) and whose main occupation was supervising the black workers. These new workers came from the ranks of newly proletarianised Afrikaners. This process had begun to become apparent by 1913. At this date 31% of white miners were South African born (5).

The miners' trade union, the Transvaal Miners Association (TMA), tried to recruit these workers. As unskilled workers they were very vulnerable to replacment by blacks. As workers who saw their future and their children's future to lie in South Africa they were more concerned with maintaining a place for whites in the gold mining industry. Unlike the craft unions the TMA recruited unskilled workers, but only whites. Unlike the craft unions which tried to restrict access to the craft by means of trade union rules, apprenticeship, and agreements with the employers, the TMA tried to prevent black encroachment by legislative means. Partly because of the pressure of the white workers some mining regulations had been promulgated which restricted certain mining operations, such as blasting and hauling men to whites. The TMA tried to ensure that these regulations were complied with. In 1910 the TMA had a membership not much greater than the craft unions although it had a much larger potential membership draw on. It increased rapidly after this and soon outpaced them (6).

In 1913 the gold mining industry war the only industry of any size in South Africa. The value of gold produced in 1913 was £37 372 949. This compares with £17 248 834 for all manufacturing industry (1911 figure). There were many industries which had been stimulated by the development of the gold mining industry. Craft unions had been developed in some of these industries whose membership included a large

3 e.g. see evidence of Mining Unions to Economic Commission of 1925

4 This was required by Mining Regulations. In the Transvaal only whites could obtain it.

5 Select Committee on European Employment 1913. Evidence of Dr L.G. Irvine a member of the Advisory Committee of Miners' Phthisis Board.

6 Year Book No 1 1910-16 p. 284

	1910	1911	1912	1913
Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners	720	700	1299	1700
Amalgamated Society of Engineers	1568	1838	1824	2922
S,A. Engine Drivers and Firemens Association	1150	1300	1221	1272
Transvaal Miners' Association	1860	1800	2800	6700

(Note the large increase in membership after the 1913 strike)

proportion of the white worker employer in the industry (7). The infrastructure necessary for the growth of the gold industry was developed under state control. This included the railways which was the only other largescale employer of white labour. They employed 31,066 whites 5340 of whom were artizans and 16,518 of whom were running staff. Some of the artizans belonged to the craft unions. The Amalgamated Society of Railway and Harbour Servants (ASRHS) was a general railway union and all railway employees were eligible for membership.

This is largely an emprirical study of the 1913 miners' strike and the 1914 railway strike. I concentrate on events rather than analysis and would be glad of any help from people in the seminar. Although it is impossible to exhaustively state the causes for the 1913 strike I outline some of the factors I see as important. These include the insecurity of white miners because of their fear of being replaced by black and their reaction to general labour condition including their insecurity of tenure and the occupational disease phthisis. The strike itself revolved around the question of the recognition of trade unions which the TCM refused to do. As far as the trade unions were concerned recognition by the controllers of the industry was an important first step in getting some control over the conditions of their labour. The TCM, as a representative of Imperial Capital, formulated policies that would allow for the fullest exploitation and therefore wanted absolute control of the industry. As already pointed out they wanted to free themselves as much as possible from dependency on white labour which was expensive and pushed up costs of production which it was essential to minimise. The government at first played an inconspicuous role in the strike but when it rapidly escalated they attempted to repress it by force and many people were killed. The strike ended in a compromise with white labour. The government prepared legislation which would have led to the recognition and incorporation of trade unions. At the same time they prepared comprehensive repressive measures in the expectation that continuing unrest among white workers would lead to another strike. When the railway strike was called in January 1914 Martial Law was immediately declared, there was a mass mobilization of troops and harsh repressive measures were enforced. The strike movement collapsed ignominiously. The proposed industrial legislation was not passed. I argue that the governments' actions in 1913 and 1914 must be seen in the context of an economy dependent on cheap black labour and unable to find a permanent role for white labour, which also led to extreme fear of White worker action leading to black unrest, and of a polity dependent on maintaining its links, as a peripheral state, with the Imperial power.

1913 and 1914 were years of general labour unrest. There were also strikes by Indian and Black workers. I do not examine these strikes. But it is important to notice that, even though the employers and the government were unable to formulate any long term policy for white labour and responded repressively, as far as the Black and Indian workers were concerned the repression and use of violence by the state was far more naked.

7 ibid

	1910	1911	1912	1913
United Operative Bricklayers' Society	400	300	300	300
S.A. Typographical Union	437	489	986	1121
S.A. Operative Masons	658	642	510	-

The Dispute Starts at the New Kleinfontein Mine

The 1913 strike of white gold miners started as a local dispute on the New Kleinfontein mine and it was several weeks before it developed to become a large scale confrontation involving the whole mining industry.

In May 1913 a new manager came to the New Kleinfontein mine. As was the custom at the time, he brought a number of miners from his old mine with him and a number of white workers on the New Kleinfontein left, 75 out of a total of 461 white workers. According to the manager 15 of these had been dismissed, the rest left voluntarily (1).

The manager decided to reorganize the work of the underground mechanics. He discharged two mechanics and put two on the surface. As part of his policy he wished to alter the hours of work to correspond with those of white miners on the mine i.e. 7.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. every day except Sunday, whereas previously underground mechanics had finished work at 12.30 p.m. on Saturdays. The men refused to work the new hours and left the mine on 10 May. The mechanics' trade union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, or ASE, posted notices on the mine forbidding their members to fill the places of the five underground mechanics who had left. The manager employed men who did not belong to the trade union to replace those who had left. The Inspector of White Labour warned him that under the Industrial Disputes Act of 1904 he should have given a month's notice of the intention to change the conditions of work (2). In his evidence to the Witwatersrand Disturbances Commission the manager admitted that he had acted summarily. He claimed that he made the change for reasons of efficiency although he did not know whether the situation that had previously existed at the New Kleinfontein had caused any problems. He acted without finding out what the customary hours on the other mines were. Negotiations between the manager and the ASE officials, who wanted reinstatement of the men on the old terms, proved abortive. On 26 May the white miners on the Number 2 shaft at the New Kleinfontein refused to go to work. The trade unions held a ballot of all the white workers at the New Kleinfontein and a strike was declared. On 28 May a strike committee was formed consisting of R. Haynes (Chairman), J.T. Bain (Secretary), T. Matthews (Secretary TMA), T.A. Tole (V-President Transvaal Federation), D. Dingwall (Pres. of the S.A. Council of Boilermakers' Society), G.H. Kendall (Organizing Secretary of the ASE), J. Pender (Organizer of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners), R. Waterston (Organizer of the Engine Drivers' and Firemens' Association), George Mason and D. Simons (3). They were all trade union officials, none of them were employed at the New Kleinfontein mine.

The strike committee demanded the reinstatement of the mechanics and a reversion to the old hours. Management refused to have anything to do with the committee because they were not New Kleinfontein employees. Employees would, of course, not submit demands for fear of victimisation. Attempts at mediation by government officials proved abortive (4). The strike committee refused to consider any offer not made directly to them. After the strike had begun the demands of the strikers

1. Wits Disturbances Commission 1913 (henceforth called Disturbances Commission) Evid. of the manager, Bulman.
2. MNW 253 mm 2896/14 IWL to secretary Mines and Industries 8.2.14
3. Disturbances Colmission Report
4. A discussion of these negotiations follows in the next section.

escalated. One of the reasons for this was the confidence of the leaders that the men on strike were solidly behind them and the apparent strong sense of solidarity of the strikers. Strikers and their leaders wanted to muster support amongst other mine workers. To do this it would be necessary that the New Kleinfontein men be seen to be fighting on general issues and not only over the 'domestic affairs' of the mine. Initially this support was necessary for financial reasons but as time passed it became apparent that the general support of white mine workers would be necessary to overcome the intransigence of the management.

The Transvaal Miners' Association (TMA) Executive and the Federation of Trades, to whom the TMA were affiliated, were against a general strike but the strike committee was divided on the issue (5). The escalated demands included a demand for a Saturday afternoon holiday for all white mine workers and later a demand for an 8 hour day, bank to bank (6). (Bank to bank means the time taken to get to the rock face and back to the surface is included in the 8 hour day). The mining regulations restricted the hours of underground workers to 8 hours, face to face; in other words they were not paid for time taken to get to the face.

On 7 June notices were posted up at the mine offering to revert to original hours, to reinstate all the strikers and to organize a committee to see if the Saturday shift could be started and finished earlier. Committee representatives would be nominated from among employees only, not trade unionists (7). The notice also said that all men who did not return to work by 11 June would be paid off and would not be taken back (8). As a result of this the New Kleinfontein employees held a ballot in which a large majority voted in favour of continuing the strike and voted in favour of calling a general strike of all mineworkers (9).

On 11 June the management of New Kleinfontein restarted operations using strike breakers and began erecting fences around the property to protect them (10). The majority of the workers employed were new (11), which vindicates claims of the strike committee, put forward in opposition to press reports, that few men had returned to work (12). According to the strike breakers, they were offered 50% more than the usual rate while the strike was on, permanent employment afterwards and complete protection (13). The management also issued notices of eviction on single and married strikers who lived on mine property (14).

Up to the 11th Benoni, where most of the strikers lived, had been absolutely quiet, the strikers had restricted themselves to peaceful picketing of the mine (15), but from this date onwards the atmosphere became increasingly tense. Violence, drunkenness, and destruction of property, including arson, increased (16). The strikers took action to try to prevent the operations on the New Kleinfontein continuing. Bands of strikers stopped supply wagons on the road and destroyed goods destined for the mine (17). The homes of scabs and relatives and freinds of scabs were attacked and many houses were burnt (18). On 26 June the police of Boksburg magisterial district asked for permission to close down licensed premises in Benoni because of the "alarming" increase of drunkenness in town and the increasingly ugly temper of the strikers (19). Scabs were assaulted, occasionally they were only humiliated, but often the assaults were very brutal (20). Soon Benoni was 'festooned' with red - people flew red flags from their houses and wore red rosettes to indicate allegiance and ensure protection (21). The strike committee handed out permits to strikers and strike sumpathizers to protect their property (22). A firm which supplied bread before the strike to the New Kleinfontein mine were forced by the strike committee to promise that they would cease supplying New Kleinfontein personnel (23). This did not save them from having their premises burnt down (24).

5. Disturbances Commission. Evidence of Acting I.W.L. Q2133 re meeting of TMA on 1.6.13 when Haynes J.F. Brown, Tole, Kendall, Matthews, Carbis and Twomey said that strike must be confined to the New Kleinfontein.
6. Disturbance Commission IWL Q104. Under Secretary for Mines Q301. Also MNW 253 MM 2896/14 IWL to secretary mines and Industries 8.2.14.
7. Report of Disturbances commission.
8. ibid
9. ibid

In view of the fact that the management refused to negotiate with the strike committee and the fact that with the employment of strikebreakers the mine was soon running successfully, the strikers made attmepts to induce the black mine-workers to join the strike (25). There were sporadic strikes of black mineworkers from 14 June which continued until after the white mineworkers had returned to work (26).

On 16 June a deputation of strikers went to see the manager (27). The discussion resulted in a deadlock over the issue of the strikers' demand for the reinstatement of all the men. The manager said this was impossible because he had to consider the strikebreakers whom he had engaged. He also said that he would not consider taking part in any further negotiations (28).

The Strike Spreads

In this situation, with the mine producing successfully, the strikers decided that the only means of applying pressure available to them was to spread the strike. A group of strikers visited neighbouring mines. The Van Ryn mine balloted against a strike but were persuaded to join the strike by Trade union leaders, J.T.Bain and A. Crawford (30). According the police evidence Crawfore addressed the men asking those who support the New Klinfontein strikers to stand on one side, the scabs on the other (31). On 19 June the strikers went to the New Modderfontein. Here, too, the official ballot was against a strike, but the white workers came out on 21 June. On all these mines the engine drivers came out with the rest of the men. In previous strikes a lack of agreement between the engine drivers and the white miners had seriously weakened the strikes (32). On 19 June the strike leaders Bain, Mason, Brown and Tole were arested for inciting to stike, a crime under the Industrial Disputes Act (Transvaal 1909) (33).

10 Disturbances commission Evidence of IWL Q2 140 and Assistant Magistrate Boksburg Q861
11 ibid. Evidence of IWL
12 ibid. Annexure B8. Leaflet of Federation of Trades
13 MNW 191 MM 2547/13 J. Lampert Solicitor to Minister Mines 26.7.13
14 Disturbances Commission SAP Evidence Q1614
15 MNW 165 IWL Report May 1913
16 Disturbances Commission SAP Evidence Q1661, 528.
17 ibid
18 ibid Q1532
19 'Justice' 165 Magistrate Boksburg to Secretary for Justice 26.6.13
20 Disturbances Commission SAP Evidence Q789
21 ibid Also Assistant Magistrate Q844
22 ibid SAP Evidence Q2770, Exhibit B10 Annexures, 'Transvaal Leader' 31.7.13
23 ibid Evidence of G.M. Taylor
24 ibid Q8694 onwards
25 ibid Evidence of Assistant Magistrate and Resident Magistrate Boksburg and H.M. Taberer of the Native Recruiting Corporation Q8 49,979,1028.
26 Discussed later
27 Disturbances Commission Evidence of IWL Q244-51.
28 ibid
30 ibid IWL Q256
31 ibid SAP Evidence Q1478
32 Rand Daily Mail (henceforth RDM) 1.7.13, also 'Justice' 165 Colonel ruter, commissioner SAP to Attorney General 3.6.13.
33 Disturbances Commission SAP Evidence Q427

Although he had played a prominent part in persuading workers to strike Crawford was not arrested.

According to the evidence of the manager of the Brakpan mines, on 20 June the workshop and surface employees on the mine passed a vote of censure on the strike committee for calling out the Van Ryn and New Modderfontein workers. On 21st the underground employees passed a resolution dissociating themselves from the vote of censure of the surface employees. This an interesting index of the difference in the way these two groups perceived their interests. On 30 June white workers on the Modderfontein B mine struck. Notices were immediately posted up ordering single men to vacate mine quarters by 2 July and married men by 7 July. Understandably enough this caused a lot of bitterness among the men and the strike committee threatened to withdraw the pump men and allow the mine to flood if the notice was not withdrawn (35).

In an attempt to stop bands of strikes going from mine to mine pulling out other workers the magistrate of Boksburg was authorized to issue an order prohibiting gatherings of more than 6 people under Law No. 6 of 1894 of the Transvaal (36). In fact for several days no more miners did come out on strike. The strikers were, perhaps, waiting to see what effect their actions would have on mine management and the Chamber of Mines (TCM). The strike committee was divided on the issue. On the 28th of June the president of the TMA, Twomey, the secretary of the TMA, T. Matthews, and the president of the Federation conferred with the strike committee and warned them against spreading the strike any further (37). The officials primary concern was financial but they must have also been worried about the strike movement getting out of control.

The strike committee made arrangements for a mass meeting of strikers in Benoni Market Square on 29 June. According to the police report the trade union officials intentions were to gather enough strikers together to attack the New Kleinfontein mine. It is not possible to prove or disprove this accusation. Calling a mass meeting was in itself no evidence of intent to incite violence. In most strikes such meetings are used by officials to maintain links with the strikers, to maintain control and direction and prevent demoralisation and fragmentation of the movement.

The meeting was contrary to the notice prohibiting gatherings posted on 20 June but General Smuts gave permission for it to be held after representations from Madeley, a Labour Party MLA, who promised that there would be no violence. Although the meeting was orderly at first, there was a sudden rush of the crowd toward the New Kleinfontein mine. Police reports on the actions of the strike leaders conflict somewhat. According to one report the leaders did all they could to prevent the crowd going to the mine. According to another report J.T. Bain was prominent in urging on the strikers (38). The police had prepared for any crowd action and protected the mine with bayonets at the ready (39).

35 ibid. Statement of Carl Davies Manager of Brakpan C29.
36 ibid SAP Evidence Q499
37 R.D.M. 1.7.13
38 Disturbances Commission SAP Evidence Q601-22 Q1563
39 ibid

From 29 June the situation of confrontation escalated. The government obtained permission to use imperial troops almost 3 000 of whom were sent to the Rand from 30 June onwards (40). On the 1st July a band of strikers went to the Simmer Pan power station Germiston and had no difficulty in persuading the men to come out on strike (41). The white workers at the Rose Deep gold mine balloted and decided to come out if the Federation called a general strike. Bands of strikers were busy up and down the reef persuading the workers to join them on strike. On the 1st July a band of strikers and women marched from Benoni to Boksburg to call out the East Rand Proprietary Mines workers. There a verbal battle ensued, the mens' leaders attempted to persuade the men to come out while the management attempted to persuade them to stay in, and George Farrar of the TCM motored from one mine to another of the group trying to persuade the men not to strike. Despite his efforts white workers in the four mines of the group struck work on the 2nd of July (42). An attempt was made on the 2nd July to blow up the steel standard carrying electric power to the Apex mine. If this had been successful it would have meant that there would have been no power for the Apex or New Kleinfontein mines or Benoni town (43). Considering the availability of dynamite to the strikers and the vulnerability of goldmining plant it is perhaps surprising that this tactic was hardly attempted and instead the strikers stuck to the traditional tactic of calling on the support of their fellows.

By the second of July the white workers on 20 gold mines, the Simmer Power Station and some on the Victoria Falls Power Company works had struck work - a total of nearly 5 000 workers. At this stage the TMA decided to re assert control of a developing movement. They resolved on a general strike without a ballot from the fourth of July. The Federation supported this call and pledged themselves to call out workers in other industries.With the TMA and the Federation taking official control of the situation the original strike committee was to disband (44). The TMA executive endorsed the tactic of the strike committee in sending bands of strikers round the mines but insisted there must be no violence and the pumpmen must not be called out. This was in response to the actions of strikers who had raided the Anglo Deep mine, seizing the special constables, destroying their warrants, and pulled out the pumpmen so that the mine was now flooding (45). By the 5th of July all mines were affected and 19 000 White workers were on strike (46). As the Rand Daily Mail wrote, the policy had achieved "amazing success" and had the "wholehearted" support of the men" (47).

On the fourth of July all trade unions affiliated to the Federation were supposed to come out on strike. This included the Mason's Society, the Boilermakers, Engineers, Coopers, Painters, Blacksmiths, Carpenters and Joiners, Tailors, Typographical and Tramway Employees trade unions. Many of these worked on the mines and had already come out, some joined on the 4th of July and others were pulled out by strikers. The Federation also passed a resolution calling on the railway workers to support them, however they met with little response (48).

40 'Correspondence Relating To the Disorders on the Witwatersrand between the Governor General and the Secretary of State' - in DC 142 5115.
41 RDM 4.7.13
42 ibid 2.7.13
43 Disturbances Commission Evidence of Chief Engineer New Kleinfontein Q6963
44 RDM 2.7.13
45 Disturbances Commission B20. Magistrate to Secretary for Justice 3.7.13
46 ibid B4
47 RDM 1.7.13
48 'Justice' 193 3/18/12 Annual Conference of ASRHS Bloemfontein August 1913

The Federation sent notification to the Town Clerk that they would not call out municipal employees engaged on "essential services" (49).

Mass Meeting July 4th:

The TMA called a mass meeting in Johannesburg on the fourth of July at 2 p.m. Strikers came in from all over the Reef, some of them on trains that had been specially provided. At 11 p.m. General Smuts notified the magistrate and police that the meeting was to be prohibited (50). People had already gathered in the market square when notices of prohibition were being posted up. The magistrate interviewed members of the strike committee, Matthews and Watson, and informed them of the ban. They promised to help the authorities (51). By 2 p.m. several thousand people had gathered. The evidence of witnesses to the Disturbances Commission is so contradictory it is impossible to trace a single thread of events. There was general agreement that the strike leaders spoke to the crowd and tried to persuade them to disperse but were shouted down (52). But there are many versions of what happened after that. From the number of police injured it is clear that evidence that missiles were thrown at them is correct though it is impossible to say at what stage of the rioting of the 4th and 5th of July this occured. Despite police evidence that they had been shot on before they retaliated by firing and that they continued to be fired on, out of 166 police and troops injured out 3 suffered bullet wounds (53). Out of 21 civilians killed on the fourth and fifth of July 20 died from bullet wounds.

The troops were lined up in force around the square. According to the Rand Daily Mail and a solicitor who was sightseeing from a balcony the cavalry charged fiercely through the crowd with swords drawn. The police deny that any charge took place at all (54). The crowd did not disperse until they had been shot at by the troops. From then on the centre of Johannesburg was thronged with rioters until the early hours of the morning. The strikes"pulled out" the tramway men. According to police reports various strike leaders including Mary Fitzgerald and Ward addressed a meeting of the strikers in the evening and urged them to arm themselves to protect themselves from the police and troops (55). The crowd rampaged through Johannesburg looting gunshops. They burnt down the offices of the 'Star' newspaper and Park Station. They then proceeded to the Corner House. But the authorities had anticipated this move and the corner house was well protected by dragons. According to a CID report the crowd threatening the Corner House refused to disperse even when several volleys were fired into the air, thinking that only blanks were being fired, so the dragoons fired into the crowd for two to three minutes (56). By 2 a.m. the town was more or less quiet again. The next morning, however, the crowd gathered again, this time around the Rand Club. This was protected by troops ready to fire on anyone who approached. Reinforcements armed with rifles arrived and occupied the Club. The crowd was ordered to disperse or force would be used. Several witnesses testify that the crowd refused to disperse, people shouting out that they would when the troops dispersed (57). The evidence is again contradictory. The police claim that they did not fire until fired on, other witnesses claiming the opposite (58). When the shooting

49 Disturbances Commission. Evidence Town Clerk Q5667
50 Resident Magistrate Q1164
51 ibid Q1170
52 ibid Assistant Magistrate Q1762
53 ibid Deputy Commissioner SAP Q 2082
54 Rand Daily Mail 5.7.13 Disturbances Commission Q 9300
55 Disturbances Commission - evidence of SAP Q3140-3152
56 Disturbances Commission - evidence of SAP C10 Q3069-3126
57 Commission Evidence of A. Dunbar S. Steinwurtzel Q6689
58 e.g. SAP Q4212 Solicitor Q9317

started the crowd fell back, some hid in doorways and recesses to keep out of the line of fire. People who attempted to reach the injured lying in the roadway and gutter were shot at by the troops (59).

Apart from the shoting and looting the town was in chaos. Because of the strike no trams were running and there was no lighting. General Smuts and Prime Minister Botha after consultation with the Chamber of Mines on the terms they were willing to offer consulted the strike committee and draw up a truce agreement which provided for full reinstatement, compensation to victims of the rioting, compensation to the strikebreakers, no victimisation, and a provision for the Federation to submit to the Government grievances drawn up by the tradeunions. The Government decided to pay the strikebreakers one years pay and gave them a free railway ticket to any station in the union with police protection when they left the mines (60). The government appointed a magistrate to enquire into cases for compensation. The only people who would be considered for compensation would be (a) People who had no part in any unlawful acts on the fourth and fifth of July and were not spectators of these acts who had been injured through the use of firearms by the police or military (b) Dependants of people in category (a) who had been killed

The Federation complained about the terms saying the scope of the enquiry was far less than they had been promised ((61).

SECTION 2

1913 Strike - Negotiation - The Attitude of the Management and Government Towards. Trade Unions and The Strike

From the first the management of the New Kleinfontein mine refused to negotiate with the strike committee. As the Chairman of the Board of Directors, Dalrymple, wrote in a letter to the Inspector of White Labour, such a move would set a precedent which would affect the whole gold mining industry. (60). The recognition of trade unions was not only seen to involve an encroachment on managerial authority but would also constitute an encouragment to the white workers to become members of trade unions. Dalymple was quite open to the commission of Enquiry in admitting that the mine would prefer to employ all non-union men (61).

The Acting Inspector of White Labour, Steyn, part of whose functions included mediating in industrial disputes involving white workers, and the undersecretary for Mines, Blundell interviewed Dalrymple on the 29th of May, the day after the strike commenced, showed him a telegram from Cape Town which indicated that the Minister wanted the management to yield on the question of hours and deprive the strikers of their excuse for striking (62). The implications of this being that the unrest ran deeper and the issues were wider than the immediately predisposing cause of the strike and that for management to yield this point would weaken the strikers' cause by undermining their moral position and decreasing public support. According to Steyn the chairman Dalrymple took the telegram to

59 e.g. Disturbances Commission Evidence of Commercial Traveller
60 MNW 238 mm 1779/13
61 'Justice' Box 164 3/541/13
62 ditto I.W.L. Q 48-45

show to the Transvaal Chamber of Mines (TCM). Later Steyn wrote to Dalrymple suggesting that the directors of the company should meet the strike committee and set a precedent for once and for all in the gold mining industry of conferring with trade union officials. Dalrymple wrote the mines department before placing Steyn's letter before his Board asking if Steyn's letter had been sent with the approval of the government. On the 8th June Blundell wrote and told Dalrymple that Steyn had gone further than authorized by the Minister - who wants the company to meet the employees accompanied by anybody elected by then, irrespective of whether or not they elect trade union officials (63). As the workers were almost bound to elect trade union officials Dalrymple did not feel that this demand was very different from that suggested by Steyn and wrote back that under no circumstances would they meet trade union officials, adding cuttingly, that if the government thought this was the correct policy why did they not recognise the trade unions of government employees (64).

At the end of May, with the strike only a few days old, the Minister considered the possibility of prosecuting the management for contravening the Industrial Dispute Act. However the Attorney General warned that it was useless to attempt a presecution as the act did not prescribe any penalty for contravening the relevant clause (65). A little while later the Commissioner of Police controlling the police forces in the area also suggested prosecuting the management and if there was no settlement after that it would be feasible to prosecute the strike "agitators" for inciting to violence and contravening the Industrial Disputes Act (66). No arrests were made until much later in June. The authorities at first, no doubt, were wary of arresting strike leaders for fear of inflaming the situation particularly if no action was taken against the management who had initially contravened the act.

In view of the refusal of the management to negotiate with the strike committee a number of people became involved in trying to reach a settlement including the TCM, the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, the Deputy Mayor of Benoni and various government officials. The Deputy Mayor of Benoni had offered his services as a mediator from the beginning. After refusing Steyn's plea to meet the strike committee Dalrymple, in consultation with the TCM, sent a letter to the Deputy Mayor thanking him for his and setting out the terms on which they would agree to a settlement (67). They agreed to reinstate all the men and to revert to the old hours for the mechanics. However the strike committees demands had escalated to include the abolition of Saturday afternoon work for everybody. Anyway the strike committee refused to consider the offer sent via the Deputy Mayor because it had not been addressed directly to them.

Towards the end of May talk of increasing the demands to include a demand for an 8 hour bank to bank became general in Benoni (68).When Steyn interviewed the strike committee on the 29th of May some of them put forward this demand. Bain asked Steyn to submit a proposal to the minister to pass a bill on an 8 hour bank to bank to prevent an industrial conflagation' (69). The Inspector did not do this. Instead he telegraphed the Minister suggesting that the government form wage boards to get over the problem of management refusing, to recognise trade union officials (70).

63 Disturbances Commission Dalrymple Q7136
64 ditto Exhibit - correspondence between Steyn, Dalrymple and Secretary for Mines
65 ditto Evidence of Under Secretary Mines Q285. This clause provided for the giving of one month's notice before changes in wages or conditions could be implemented.
66 'Justice' Box 165. Ruter Commissioner SAP to Attorney General 3.6.13
67 'MNW' Box 165 'Labour Report' May 1913
68 Disturbance Commission Steyn Q 298
69 Disturbances Commission Steyn Q104-111
70 ibid Q141

General Smuts instructed the assistant magistrate of Benoni to write to Bain, secretary of the strike committee and offer his services as a mediator. The magistrate wrote, signed himself without his official designation and "made it very clear that my action in no way involved the Government" (71). Clearly the Government was also wary of giving any overt recognition to the strike committee. Bain replied that the strike committee was always prepared to negotiate but only directly with management, not through an intemediary.

After the white workers of the Van Ryn came out on strike on the nineteenth of June Bain, Mason, Tole and Brown were arrested under the Industrial Disputes Act for in incitement to strike(72)On the 21st when the New Modderfontein workers struck Dingwall and Kendall were arrested (73). After the first arrests about a thousand people marched to the charge office and demanded the release of the strike leaders (74). There was some stone throwing but the crowd readily dispersed when ordered to (75). The leaders were allowed out on bail. The trial was postponed until the ninth of July, which fell after the strike settlement between the strike committee and Botha and Smuts. It is impossible to say what would have happened if these strike leaders had been refused bail for the course of the strike. I discuss later the militancy of the strikers and the reasons for the strike. One of these was the demand of the workers to have trade union leaders recognised. The detention of these leaders in jail may well have inflammed to situation and new leaders would have been produced. According to some people's view the general strike was the result of intimidation of workers by mobs led by trade union leaders (76). When the cases come up for trial the men were released supposedly as part of the strike agreement but one can also assume that the authorities would have been cautious about proceeding with the prosecutions in view of the contriving unrest on the Rand (77). Others whose trials came up towards the end of 1913 were not so fortunate. Sentences of form 2 to 5 years were passed on people accused of being involved in the burning of Park Station, shops in Benoni and of assaulting the police. (78).

After the employers ultimatum on the ninth of June the Kleinfontein employees voted overwhelmingly to remain on strike (79). At this stage Bain believed that the men would return to work if the company would concede the stoppage of all work at 12.30 a.m. on Saturdays. The Minister, when informed of this view, urged the directors of the company to adopt this way out but they replied that any material change in the working arrangements at the Kleinfontein would lead to a demand for similar changes at other mines (80).

The Government did not play a conspicious role in negotiations or any actions to reach a settlement. They advised the company on ways out of the impasse but did not put pressure on them to accept the advice. Their initial concern was the effect the strike would have on the black workers on the mine who had no work because of the strike. With Ministerial approval the Director of Native Labour instructed the management of the mine on the day the strike began that all black workers must be paid in full and the time counted against the period of their contracts (81). The management of the company wanted to pay decreased rates and asked the Director of Native labour for his co-operation in persuading the black workers but he refused (82). At the beginning of July, when the strike was rapidly spreading, the Government took steps to prevent further recruiting of blacks for the Rand Mines. Telegrams were sent to Magistrates instructing them to refuse passes to blacks and to decline to attent contracts until the unrest on the Rand was over. The embargo on recruiting lasted until the fourth of August (83).

71 'Justice' Box 166 3/541/13 Assistant Magistrate Benoni to Secretary Justice 26.6.13
72 Disturbances Commission SAP Evidence Q.472
73 ibid Q.491
74 ibid Q.476
75 ibid Q.479
76 e.g. Disturbances Commission Steyn Q.235
77 MNW Box 238 mm 1779/13 Strike Diary
78 'Justice' 192 3/35/14
79 Disturbances Commission Report
80 Disturbances Commission Exhibits A10, A10a, N

On the twenty second of June, after the strike had begun to spread, Smuts and Department of Mines representatives met representatives of the New Kleinfontein Van Ryn, New Modderfontein strike committee. The interview produced no fruitful results. The strike committee insisted that all the strikebreakers must be dismissed, which the management refused to do on the grounds that they had obligations towards them, and that all police protection must be removed (84).

It was the employment of strike breakers and the states action in providing protection for these strikebreakers that inflamed the situation. Despite their protestations the government clearly did not maintain a neutral position. As soon as the strike began extra police were drafted to Benoni. After the eleventh of June when strikebreakers were first engaged, police escorts were provided for vehicles coming into Benoni (85). Police escorted strike breakers in to the mines, sometimes as many as 80 police protected 40 strike breakers (86). As the strike spread all available police and SAMR were drafted to Johannesburg and the Reef. By the fourth of July the day of the fatalmass meeting in Johannesburg there were one thousand armed police in Johannesburg (87). On the thirtieth of June Smuts applied to the Governor General for permission to employ imperial Troops. At this stage the strike was beginning to spread rapidly. By the fifth of July nearly 3 000 cavalry and infantry had been sent to Johannesburg and the Reef (88). Up to the fourth of July Smuts avoided the government or its forces taking a central role. He permitted the meeting of the twenty ninth of June and seemingly only decided at the last moment to prohibit the meeting of the 4th July. The officer in command of the troops consulted the chief magistrate and the commissioner SAP in Johannesburg on the fourth July and decided to keep the troops out of view. When they heard that the meeting was banned they decided instead to line up the troops in a mass on the Market Square (89). It seems that the government had hoped that the strike would not spread. The Union Defence forces were in the midst of reorganising and were not available in sufficient numbers to suppress the strike. When the strike spread so rapidly Smuts requisitioned Imperial troops. On the fourth of July when it was clear that a violent confrontation would be inevitable if the meeting was prohibited Smuts gave J.P. Fitzpatrick permission to organise an armed defence force of "leading citizens" (90).

After the strike had been suppressed and the government had negotiatied with the strike committee, the trade unions, through not officially recognised, had obtained a temporary defacto recognition. In terms of the strike agreement both sides agreed that there would be no victimisation. However soon after work recommenced the management complained that the strikers were refusing to work with certain men they called scabs. The government had only compensated strikebreakers who had been brought in after the strike began. As far as the workers were concerned anyone who worked during the strike was a scab. Smuts and the Minister of Mines went to Benoni on the eleventh of July and pleaded with the Federation leaders to use their influence to get strikers to resume work with the scabs (91). After the strike the minister of Mines met representatives of the goldmining

81 'Native Affairs' Box 5 mm 1870/13/F/2
82 ibid
83 ibid Secretary Native Affairs to Secretary for Justice 6.12.13
84 Disturbances Commission Evidence of Commissioner SAP
85 Commission SAP Q528
86 ditto District Commandant SAP Boksburg Q1453
87 ditto Commission SAP, Tuter, Q1371
88 DC 142 file 5115. Correspondence of Governor Relating to recent disorders
89 Commission Evidence of O.C. Q5651
90 Commission Evidence of J.P. Fitzpatrick
91 MNW 238 mm 1779/13 Strike Diary

companies who agreed to authorize managements to meet officials of the TMA if disputes occured. The employers agreed to do this pending legislation on the registration and incorporation of trade unions (93). After the strike the Department of Mines received deputations from the Federation and the trade unions and discussed proposed industrial legislation with them (94).

Immediately after the strike the trade unions and the Federation achieved temporarily the recognition which they had sought.

From the evidence of the manager and chairman of the board of directors of the New Kleinfontein and the Inspector of White Labour it is clear that the intransigence of the New Kleinfontein on the question of recognition arose from the knowledge that this would set a precedent which would affect the whole gold industry. However this does not answer the question of why the gold mining industry should have been so anti-union at a time when management in the metropolis and in Western Europe after pressure and militant action from trade unions increasingly recognised trade unions and sometimes dealt solely through them. Part of the answer lies in the kind of capital which is invested in the colonies. It is invested in the colonies rather than the imperial nation because of the possibilities of the exploitation of cheap labour. In order to attain this it is necessary that the capitalists through the management maintain as much control over the labour force as possible so that it can be exploited as much as possible and deployed in the most profitable way. This is clearly what happened in the case of the gold mining industry of South Africa. As explained in the introduction this demanded an exceptionally cheap labour force.

93 MNW 234 mm 1074/14
94 'Justice' 178 3/1418/13 Reports of Secretary for Mines

SECTION 3

Grievances Submitted by Trade Unions and the Employer Reply

In terms of the agreement between the government and the trade unions of the fifth of July the Federation submitted a list of demands to the government on behalf of the white workers. There was an expectation that the government itself would introduce measures to effect some of the demands rather than risk a repetition of the riots of July. At the conference between the Government and the Federation from the 22nd to the 24th July the Federation representatives offered to drop all their demands if the government would call a general election (100). To make such a demand the Federation must have thought that confidence in the Government had been very much undermined. They must have hoped for a new government that would be more amenable towards trade unions and labour reform. The Government did not resign but instead using a well tried 'cooling' device offered to appoint a commission to investigate their demands.

The demands forwarded by the Federation on behalf of the white trade union included:-

1. Introduction of 8 hour day
2. Establishment of a minimum wage
3. Abolition of Sunday work
4. Payment for public holidays
5. The gradual abolition of imported, indentured labour
6. Repeal of the Industrial Disputes Act
7. Factory Act
8. Repeal of Law No.6 of 1894 under which the magistrate had forbidden gatherings of more than 6.
9. Consolidation of mines' sickness and benefit societies
10. Workmen's compensation act.
11. 8 hour bank to bank
12. Increased wage for mineworkers
13. Establishment of fully indentured apprenticeship system.
14. Abolition of piecework in all government departments.
15. Permanent Railway Enquiry Board with equal representation of Administration and employees.
16. Recognition of trade unions. (101).

If all these demands could have been implemented it would have meant a change in the whole structure of industry in South Africa. The gold mining industry had been built up on and depended on a continuing supply of, cheap blacks labour (102). Several demands echoed those which were being made in Europe - no Sunday Labour payment for public holidays and, most important, 8 hour day.

The Government's reply was not what the Federation had anticipated. It conceded nothing. The reply agreed;

100 F.H. P. Creswell Speech in House in reply to Smuts, against indemnity Bill - 9/2/14 published as "The Attempt to Crush Labour" - page 25.
101 Government Gazett August 1913 p. 1213
102 see Johnstone op. cit.

1. To appoint a commission consisting of one representative of the mineworkers, one of the other workers, one of the mine owners and a chairman nominated by the government to discuss.
   (a) 8 hour day
   (b) Industrial Dispute Act
   (c) Sunday work
   (d) Imported and indentured labour
   (e) Wage Board
2. For railway and harbour workers a separate commission was proposed, composed of three members - one representing the white workers, one the administration and a chairman appointed by the government.
3. As far as the other demands were concerned an opportunity must be given for representative bodies of employers to make representations to the government before any legislative stops could be taken.
4. The mineworkers demands are for the mineowners to deal with (103).

The gist of this reply is that no immediate concessions would be made and that any future concessions would depend on the strength of trade unions to force them.

In their reply the TCM refused 8 hours bank to bank, and refused a wage increase. They agreed to 8½ hours bank to bank, conceded 10 days holiday on half pay after twelve months continuous work underground or two years on the surface. As far as the mineworkers were concerned no doubt they were anxious to get any holiday. As far as the TCM was concerned the granting of a paid holiday is clearly good policy considering the health risks mineworkers ran and the benefits phthisis victims were entitled to under the Phthisis Act. On this score they also agreed to the demand from underground drill sharpener that a workplace must be sanitary and well ventilated (104). The TCM agreed to the recognition of trade unions but only on certain conditions. The unions must not have a fund for political purposes e.g. sponsoring parliamentary candidates, only mine employees would be allowed to make representations to the employers, trade unions can have no say in management or discipline i.e. hiring, firing, demoting, promoting, retrenching etc, and that any minority of employees can make representation to the management without going through the trade union.

These terms of recognition would have limited the role of trade unions. One of the principle reasons for wanting the trade unions recognised and for wanting to be able to negotiate through full time officials was the fear of workers that any worker who asserted himself in making demands on submitting grievances would be liable to be victimised. The TCM insistence that only trade unionsts who were employed by the mines could negotiate with management would have obviated this. If the last clause was followed and employers encouraged employees to ignore the trade union officials then the union would be weakened and find it difficult to unite the workers. The TCM refused to recognise the Federation, to whom most of the mining trade unions were affiliated. In the TCM opinion:-

> "The real cause of the strike is to be found in the desire of the Federation of Trade Unions to be recognised by the mining industry as the sole medium for the settlement of disputes between employers and employees. To this, the industry will not agree" (105)

103 Government Gazette August 1913 p. 1213
104 ibid
105 TCM Annual Report 1913

The Government offered similar terms for the recognition of the railway workers' union - the Amalgamated Society of Railway and Harbour Servants (ASRHS) (106).

The demands of the trade unions were then sent via the Federation to the employers' organisations. The National Federation of Building Trade Employers agreed to several demands - such as the abolition of piecework, payment for public holidays, 48 hour week etc. In fact, as they pointed out in their reply, most of the demands had already been conceded in the new working rules drawn up by the employers and the Federation in May 1913. (107). They still refused to implement a closed shop which had been demanded them. The Master Tailors in their reply to the S.A. Tailors and Tailoresses Union agreed on the principle of a Factory Act and Wage Boards to determine minimum wages, they agreed on many demands including a 48 hour week. The Master Bakers refused the demand for 8 hours and for £1 per day. But they agreed to restrict "kaffir" labour to making "kaffir" bread and general unskilled work. This would not have been much of a hardship considering a large proportion of the work would have been producing bread for the mines (108). The Master Printers agreed to increase pay to £6 per week, but refused a 48 hour week, they also refused to increase overtime rates and refused 14 days paid holiday a year.

The Federation did not achieve the results it had hoped for. The better organised workers obtained some concessions. But there was to be no legislative entrenchment on 8 hour day, minimum wage, indentured labour, or the recognition of trade unions. They rejected the governments and the employers' replies as "inadequate" and threatened to call a strike to enforce them. The Federation refused to participate in the general commission offered by the Government. The Government instead appointed a commission to investigate the position of white workers, as far as wages, standard of living, hours of work and condition of work were concerned. This commission reported in January 1914 after the strike. The Railway Commission was formed towards the end of the year and did not report until the second half of 1914.

106 Smuts 'The Syndicalist Conspiracy in SA' speech in house 4,5 February 1914
107 MNW 192 mm 2583 13 National Building Employers' reply 28.8.13
108 ibid Replies of Master Tailors, Master Baker, Master Printer (all Transvaal)

4. 1913 - The Military of the Strikers

For the first two weeks of the strike there was general agreement amongst the strike leaders of the TMA and the Federation that the strike should be confined to the New Kleinfontein mine. No attempts were made at this stage to spread the strike. Strikers visited other mines to speak to the white workers about their grievances and to collect contributions to the strike fund (110). Amongst trade unionists there was some disagreement as to tactics leaders such as Crawford of the ASE, who espoused 'direct action' as part of the struggle for socialism, urged the strikers to be militant, to sabotage and destroy machinery (111). The leaders of the TMA and the SA Engine Driver and Firemen's Association (SAED, FA) dissociated themselves from such tactics (112).

After the New Kleinfontein resumed operations the strikers became more militant and persuaded the white workers on neighbouring mines, the New Modderfontein and the Van Ryn, to join the strike in sympathy. The trade union leaders were still divided. Prominent officials in the TMA, such as the President, Tooney and the Secretary, T. Matthews, and the President of the Federation opposed this and warned against spreading the strike (113). Others, such as Bain, Crawford, Mason, Brown and Tole played a leading role in spreading the strike. D. Simons of the TMA had initially sided with the moderates but when the fence was being erected on the New Kleinfontein to protect strike breakers he was prominent in trying to induce the black workers to join the strike (114).

On the second of July the moderates of the TMA decided to try to regain leadership of a movement which was outpacing them. According to T. Matthews, when the TMA met on the second of July to discuss the situation they received words from many parts of the Reef that the workers wanted to strike (115). A strike leader interviewed by the Rand Daily Mail said that "every mine in the Transvaal has its grievance. It is not a strike, it is a revolt. The men know that it is a sympathetic strike and that they are not being controlled or led, but that they are making a gigantic effort on their own. They are fighting practically without funds" (116).

Lack of funds soon became an additional reason for the desperation and militancy of the strikers. They hoped for a quick, decisive vitory once all the white workers joined the strike and the gold mining industry was brought to a standstill.

The banning of the meeting on the fourth of July, the shooting of strikers by the police and troops and the fact that, apart from the gold miners, few white workers joined the general strike were the proximate reasons for the rioting of the fourth and fifth of July.

110 Commission e.g. see evidence of Carl Davies Manager Brakpan mines
111 'Justice' Box 165. SAP report Market Square meeting 26.5.13
112 ibid
113 RDM 1.7.13
114 Commission Assistant Magistrate Boksburg
115 RDM 2.7.13
116 ibid

In their evidence to the Disturbances Commission many witnesses state their belief that the events of the evening of the fourth of July, the burning of Part Station the Star office and the attempted attack on the Corner House were the actions of "hooligans" (117). However, one must explain why, when Johannesburg was in uproar and the authorities had lost control of much of it, these targets were chosen and why hooligans should concentrate on raiding gunshops and not take advantage of the lucrative opportunities for looting (118). The choice of these targets is an indication of the involvement of strikers in the attacks. The strikers had reason to attack Park Station after their efforts to persuade the railwaymen to join the strike had failed. The strikers also had reason to attack the 'Star' offices. In the words of the Rand Daily Mail, which the strike committee praised as the only paper which had given accurate reports of the strike, 'The Star' "is controlled as is the 'Leader' by those who have always exacted from editors and others the most implicit obedience ... There is always but one alternative for those who presume to question the wisdom and condemn the stupidity of the Chamber of Mines and that is the sack".

The article goes on to explain how the TCM had used various pressures to get the Mail to toe the line; and continued:

> "Let the public consider what sort of latitude they are likely to accord their own employees when this is the policy they pursue to those who are independent of them" (120)

On the fourth of July in Market Square the crowd refused to listen to trade unionists, such as Morgan, who pleaded with them to disperse as the meeting had been banned He was hooted down (121). After the truce agreement had been signed the strike leaders had great difficulty in persuading the waiting crowd to accept the terms. In the words of the Governor General;

> "The police and the strike leaders we doing all they can to persuade the men to go home and return to work tomorrow" (122).

At a mass meeting outside the Trades Hall W.H. Andrew, Mason, Dingwall and J.T. Bain spoke and urged acceptance of the terms. To shouts of disapproval Crawford advocated calling off the strike for one month while grievances were being considered. Along with Kendall and Fitzgerald, Crawford then spoke against returning to work and instead called for a continuation of the strike until demands had been fully conceded (123).

Unrest continued on the Rand. On the seventh of July there was a large meeting of non trade union men in Johannesburg (124). Waterston of the Engine Drivers Union and SALP, addressed them urging them to join unions. Kendall and other speakers abused the strike leaders and said they had let down the non-union men by pulling them out and then accepting an agreement which was merely a bluff and achieved nothing for the men. The funeral of the people shot dead on the fourth and fifth was held on the seventh of July.

117 Commission e.g. SAP Q2561
118 Evening Chronicl 12.7.13
120 RDM 11.7.13
121 Commission Magistrate Buckle Q172
122 Governor General Correspondence relating to disturbances on the Rand 8.7.13
123 The News 7.7.13 Published by SATU on behalf of Federation
124 MNW 238 mm 1779/13 Strike Diary

According to a police report;

"the crowd at the funeral has taken up an ugly attitude and many strikers are unwilling to accept the terms agreed to by their leaders" (125).

Unrest continued in Benoni, which had been the centre of the strike. On the sixth of July the railway station and several houses in Benoni were burnt down (126). On eighth of July the Officer commanding the military forces in Benoni decided that "no men should be withdrawn from any mine until strikers return to work as isolated attempts damage property still being made". On the 18th of July the Commissioner of police asked for 30 mounted police from SAMR to patrol Benoni throughout the night until further notice (127).

The strikers returned to work after the funeral, perhaps dissatisfied with the agreement but with their unity broken, some favouring the agreement and some wanting to continue until specific demands had been conceded. Mines Department officials kept in touch with the situation and warned of the danger of the continuing unrest breaking out into another strike (128). As the weeks passed the lack of gains, considering the sacrifices of the strike, became apparent. The moderate leaders were anxious to retain the recognition they had temporarily received and did not want to display extremist tendencies. Government officials became alarmed at the growing importance of the "extremists" in the trade union movement and what they saw as the permeation of their views throughout the rank and file (129). In September there were several short stoppages of work on several mine some of them were due to the refusal of trade unionists to work with non-union men (130). In December the minister was warned that it was possible that the New Kleinfontein men would shortly strike demanding a"closed shop" and increased wages (131). On the thirtieth of December the Minister of Mines met officials of the TMA and warned them that the refusal of members to work with non-members was a breach of the July agreement. They claimed that they had tried to stop action against non-union men but were unable to stop it as the men felt so strongly on the issue (132). In his correspondance with the Minister from July onwards the Secretary for Mines insisted that the government must not relax the preparations it had begun in case of a further strike. In his view another strike would be the result of actions by "agitators" and that if sufficient force was used to "protect" the workers they would not feel intimidated and would feel safe in staying at work. (133).

From his viewpoint the workers in 1913 were intimidated into striking by a minority of extremists. This provides the rationalisation for providing large forces to "protect" workers from strikers. One might argue that the presence of armed forces would intimidate the workers and discourage them from striking.

125 SAMR 1028 305
126 MNW 238 mm 1779/13 Strike Diary
127 SAMR 1028 305 18.7.13
128 'Justice' 178 3/1418/13 Correspondence between Secretary for Mines and the Minister.
129 MNW 234 mm 1074/14 Inspector Mines Pretoria to Government Mining Engineer 9.9.13
'Justice' 178 3/1418/13. Secretary for Mines to Minister 27.8.13
130 ibid Secretary Mines to Minister 1.9.13 31.12.13
131 ibid Secretary Mines to Minister 31.12.13
Manage New Kleinfontein to Board of Directors 10.12.13
132 ibid Secretary Mines to Minister 31.12.13
133 ibid

SECTION 5

1913 - The Reasons for the Strike

It is always very difficult to understand the exact constellation of circumstances that leads workers to strike. It is never sufficient to look solely at the proximate cause. Even in a strike like the 1913 one where the trade union formulated a long list of grievances one cannot say that this exhausts the reasons for the strike. In the background to any strike is the basic conflict between workers and capital. In the 1913 strike the autocracy of the TCM and the centralization of policy and control in the goldmining industry may have been important contributory causes.

It is necessary to try to assess why the strike occured on the New Kleinfontein in the first place, why it spread as it did, and why the strike took the form that it did.

5.1 Autocracy of Management

The strike on the New Kleinfontein arose out of a change in working conditions that affected only a small proportion of the mineworkers. The underground and surface workers struck as a result of the attempted abolition of a privilege of a few mechanics which they did not themselves enjoy. The action seems therefore to have been against the autocracy of the decision, made without notification, much less consultation. This view is supported by the refusal of the workers to go back to work after the managements' promise to return to the 'status quo ante' made in their letter to the Mayor of Benoni. The strike committee refused to consider the offer because the management had by-passed them and the workers followed the strike committee's instructions. Although this did not figure directly in the demands made there is a lot of evidence that employment on the mines was very unstable. According to the Economic Commission appointed by the government in September 1913, which reported on the seventeenth of January 1914, the turnover of men on the mines was very high and many of these changes were not made on the initiative of the men (134). Using Government Mining Engineer figures from January to June 1911 they show that of 22,180 white workers employed on 53 mines 17,7 54 changes of employment were made in that period, an average of 13.3% per month (135). Apart from the inclination of some sections of white miners to move about in their employment, particularly contractors who were always looking for good contracts (136), the main reasons for the instability was the dismissal of workers considered inefficient and the frequent changes of management. When managers moved from one mine to another they usually bought with them a number of workers from the old mine and dismissed any excess workers from the new mine (137). Out of 58 managers in office in August 1913 one had been appointed in 1901, one in 1903, one in 1907, five in 1909, fifteen in 1910, seven in 1911, eighteen in 1912 and ten in 1913 (138). According to the Inspector of Mines for the Boksburg district (which included the Benoni mines) underground workers were badly treated, being summarily fined or dismissed without trial and with no means of appeal (139). In demanding the recognition of trade unions the workers may have been attempting to obtain some control over conditions. In striking in 1913 the New Kleinfontein workers were reacting against summary treatment, the change of management may have acted as a catalyst in an inflammatory situation.

134 Economic Commission UG12 1913 p. 39
135 ibid
136 Contractors comprised about one eighth of the total number of white workers in June 1913. UG12'14 para. 106.
137 UG12'14 p. 40
138 ibid
139 MNW 234 mm 1074/14 Inspector Mines report.

Once the New Kleinfontein began operations successfully the strikers had to try to spread the strike to have any hope of success. By this stage apart from the issue of reinstatement of the men and a reversion to their former hours of work other issues had been raised. As far as trade unionists were concerned the attitude of the management, presumable sanctioned by the TCM, had brought to the fore the question of the position of trade unions in the industry and the autocratic methods generally employed in dealing with the white workers, although the TCM were not anti trade union because of inherent antipathy and had pragmatically recognised the Engine Drivers Union. The TMA also raised the general question of hours and was demanding an 8 hour bank-to-bank. This was a change that the TMA, ASE and ASCJ had been pressing for many months, now they saw an opportunity to push the issue and mobilize support for the New Kleinfontein strikers around it. (140). The Inspector of White Labour, the Secretary for Mines and others put the blame for the spread of the strike on Bain, Crawford and other trade union officials whose only concern they believed was to have trade union and the Federation recognised (141). Of course trade union officials had an interest in having their union recognised as negotiators. But mineworkers did also when employment was so unstable and management authoritarian they feared victimisation if they attempted to seek redress for grievances. According to the Inspector of White Labour's evidence the miners were anxious and determined that the management should meet their representatives (142).

5. Phthisis

The question of the reduction of hours was bound up with a general reaction of workers to exploitation and also with the problem of phthisis. From 1912 onwards the state had taken measures to cause a reduction in the incidence of phthisis. According to the evidence to a commission in March of a member of the Medical Advisory Committee of the Miners' phthisis Board up to the end of 1912 the incidence of deaths from phthisis had not decreased but by 1913 it showed signs of declining (143). In his evidence to the same commission the Government Mining Engineer talks about a shortage of white miners due to the phthisis scare. (144).

At a meeting of the strike Committee in Benoni on the 1st July the chairman R. Haynes, spoke about phthisis and the TMA's determination that when operations restarted the trade unions must organize and ensure that the incidence of the disease is reduced to a minimum (145). In his evidence to the Disturbances Commission a miner D.P. Roux, who had helped to mobilize the 'dutch' speaking workers, said that phthisis and the general danger of the work due to the indifference of the management about safety, were the reasons for the strike (146).

It seems that, although it was not explicitly stated, the incidence of phthisis was one of the grievances of the workers and forms part of the general background of their distrust of management and resentment at the way they were treated. From

140 MNW 109 mm 823/12 Inspector of White Labour to Secretary for Mines
141 Commission Q 235
142 ibid Q 160
143 Select Committee on European Employment 1913. Evidence of Dr L.G. Irvine Q950
144 ibid. Evidence of R.N. Kotze 2 Q282
145 RDM 1.7.13
146 Commission D.P. Roux Q 6779

1907 onwards when the government had called on Afrikaners to scab on the white gold workers who were on strike the numbers of South African born workers increased. Unlike the migrant workers these were not so inclined to try their luck elsewhere, in America, Australia etc, they lacked mining skills and saw South Africa as their permanent home. With the development of capitalist forces in the countryside increasing number of bywoners were expelled from farms. They had nowhere to go except the reef and there were few industries apart from gold mining. In his evidence to the 1913 Commission on European Employment in answer to the question why do men go down the mines when they know they risk phthisis J.T. Bain said:-

> "They are still going down, and they will keep on going down until they die, because there is nothing else but starvation in from of them if they do not" (147).

He also pointed out that although improvements is conditions had bad been made in the last 18 months the effects of these would not be felt for a while (148).

5.3 Long Hours

As far as the question of hours generally was concerned many mine workers felt they worked excessive hours. The Economic Commission of 1914 cited cases of surface workers working 70 to 78 hours per week. Surface pumpmen worked 59 hours day shift, 48 afternoon shift and 62 night shift (149). In February 1913 after representations from the TMA on contravention of the mining regulations governing hours worked underground the Inspector of White Labour inspected various mines. Many of the men he spoke to complained of long hours. They said it was impossible to make a living unless overtime was worked. Others were resentful of those who could earn more by doing illegal overtime underground (150). After the strike of 1913 the Inspectors of Mines were asked for their opinions on the reasons for the strike. Several of them mentioned long hours. They criticised the contract system for this reason calling it "voluntary sweating". They also criticised it because of the dissatisfaction it caused among other workers when large sums of money were made by contractors and criticised this also because of the attitude engendered in the contractors by the uncertainty of their living, some months they made high wages, in other months they might come out in debt (151). In order to regulate conditions on the mines and discourage rivalry between workers and sweating by employers the trade unions demanded enhanced rates for overtime so that employers would try to depend on overtime as little as possible (152).

5.4 Insecurity because of Encroachment by Black Labour

In their evidence to the Mining Industry Board of 1922 the AEU, the Boilermakers, the Ironmoulders, the Reduction Workers, the Building Workers Industrial Union, and the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers in a joint memorandum wrote that the reason for the militancy and spread of the 1913 strike was the insecurity of white underground workers whose jobs were being steadily encroached on by black workers (153). The Economic Commission of 1914 claimed that in industry generally there had been very little displacement of whites by black workers, but, nevertheless "a constant fear of displacement is prevelant" (154). In his evidence to the 1913 Commission H. Ross Skinner, a director of the ERPM spoke about the ability of blacks to do certain classes of work restricted to whites such as rock drilling, changing and tamping holes, hoisting engines. He also said that in the past five years the practice of putting one white miner on to 2,3,4 or even 5 drilling

147 SC 1913 Evidence of J.T. Bain Q 3821
148 ibid Q 3815
149 Economic Commission UG 12'14 para 118
150 MNW 109mm 823/12 IWL to Secretary Mines 22.2.13
151 MNW 234 mm 1074/14 Inspector Mines reports September 1913
152 UG 12'14 para 124
153 Mining Industry Board 1922 Memoranda
154 UG 12'14 p. 65

machines had increased so that in effect the black man ended up actually running the machine and the white merely supervised (155). In his evidence Kotzé the Government Mining Engineer, said that the number of machines had greatly increased in the past five years but the number of machiners had remained steady (156). In his evidence RB Waterston said that actual replacement of whites by blacks had occured mainly in unskilled occupations but that blacks were learning white men's skills. For example a hauling engine driver, while supposedly responsible for the upkeep of other engines which blacks drive, in fact has too much to do and the blacks actually not only drive the engine, but also look after the boilers and manage the haulage (157) Waterston said that the tendency was for the semi-skilled black, under white supervision, to do work formerly done by whites (158).

Another reason for the strike, also unstated, would seem to have been general unrest among white miners caused by the insecurity they felt because of their lack of control of the industry and the TCM policy of using more cheap black labour.

When the trade unions submitted grievance and demands to the employers they all included a demand for increased wages. This had never been at the centre of the struggle. Even so the increase in the lost of living between 1910 and 1914 of 10% without a compensatory increase in wages may have been a contributory factor to the industrial unrest (159).

6. The Railway men in 1913

The Federation of Trades had hoped that the railway workers would join the general strike. They had grievances of their own and some favoured joining the strike (160). When the strike was officially over unrest continued among the workers in Germiston, a railway centre (161). A deputation of about 1 000 railway workers went to the Governor General's residence on the 5th July to discuss grievances (162). On the sixth July a meeting of railwaymen in Pretoria voted not to return to work until after the funerals (163). According to the Evening Chronicle after the strike the membership of the ASRHS increased rapidly. By the eleventh of July it had 1 000 members in Pretoria and 6 000 members throughout the Union (164). Rumours of an inpending railway strike persisted throughout July (165).

As government employees the railway workers were in a peculiar position. Their terms of employment were governed by Act of Parliament. A discussion of the position and grievances of the railwaymen follows later.

The railwaymen did not strike. But there were signs of closer co-operation between them and the Federation. After the government's reply to the grievances submitted on behalf of trade unions by the Federation delegates the Federation and the ASRHS confered and passed the following resolution:-

> "That this meeting of delegates views with disgust the attitude adopted by the government towards the workers of South Africa and refuses to accept their suggestions, but will rely upon our industrial and political organisation to remedy our grievances,and that no general strike be called at the present juncture". (166).

155 SC'13 Q 355
156 ibid Q 2292-6
157 ibid Q3975
158 ibid Q 3987
159 Mining Industry Board volume 3. T. Matthews evidence, quoting Director of census statistics.
160 'Justice' 193 3/18/14 Report of Annual Conference of ASRHS 18,19,20 August 1913
161 Governor General Correspondence Relating to the Disturbances on the Rand
162 ibid
163 'The News' 7.7.13
164 Evening Chronicle 11.7.13
165 SAMR 1028 305
166 MNW 166 Labour Report August 1913

Thus the Federation admitted that grievances still existed but the organi of White workers was ineffective to remedy the situation. After the stri trade unions concentrated on strengthening their organisations. The TMA organisers to Vereeniging. Witbank and Natal (167). The Federation held ganda meetings at various places on the Reef, at which they generally adv greater organisation, but at which some leaders, such as Crawford, Ander Livingstone, Nicholls, spoke of the need for the workers to form an army own and meet force by force (168).

7. Government Response to the 1913 Strike -Repression

The Government had been granted permission to use Imperial Troops statione South Africa to control the strike and suppress the disturbances. This le the shooting of workers at the behest of a "Boer" government, politically controversial act for the Imperial Government to sanction. The Union Gove was warned that they must not depend on being able to use these troops aga similar circumstances. The Governor reassured the Secretary of State in B

"I intend formally to draw the serious attention of Ministers to the lessons of last week. I am sure they realise, as you do, that Imperial Tr are not retained in South Africa to do the work which since June 30th they had to perform" (169).

As soon as the 1913 strike was formally over the Minister of Defence sent structions to the Commandant General of the Active Citizen Force ordering prepare a scheme for mobilising DRA commandos "so that say 5 000, 10 000, armed and mounted men could be assembled and marched on the scene of diso on the Witwatersrand and especially Pretoria" (190). The Commandant was re that "though endeavors would be made to move commandos by rail the assumpti be that the railways would not be available and that all movements of comma would have to be by road" (171).

The Government wanted to ensure that not only would armed forces be efficie called up but also that they would be efficiently co-ordinated and deployed the end of July 1913 a scheme had been devised whereby the Union would be d into twelve Control areas. In the event of another strike each area would under the control of SADF officer who would be responsible for co-ordinatin the government forces in the area, for controlling the movements of civilia in the area and for censoring newspapers and post (172). Instructions were to the control officers that "every step which it is possible to arrange pr to calling out the forces should now be taken by DSO's in as unobstrusive a as possible" (173). A draft proclamation calling on all citizens to help t forces of the Crown to maintain law and order was drawn up and instructions sent to magistrates on procedure for the enrolment of Special Constables (1

167 'Justice' 192 3/35/14
168 'Justice' 178 3/1468/13 SAP reports on labour meetings
169 Correspondence relating to the disturbances on the Rand
170 DC 39 file 765. Under Secretary Defence to Commandant General ACF
171 ibid
172 DC 39 file 765. Mayor Collyer DSO. General Staff to Commandant Genera 24.7.13
173 ibid
174 G.N.L.B. 111 1643/13 Minister of Defence to Magistrates 24.7.13

Following discussions with the Minister of Mines the Secretary for Mines suggested a scheme for the rapid recruitment of Special Constables. In the event of a crisis he suggested that the commissioner SAP could communicate with 5-6 well known residents who would be able to call on about 500 other experienced "gentlemen" who could do police duties while the police were occupied with strike duties. He pointed out that the chief merits of the scheme were that it could be achieved silently, quickly and effectively (175). The idea was very similar to J.P. Fitzpatrick's 'defence force' of 600 formed on the fourth of July out of a meeting of "leading citizens" (176).

One of the chief fears of the government was the effect another strike and rioting might have on the black workers. The fears about the effect of strikers on black workers were well grounded considering their strike in 1913. As the Inspector of Mines said: "what they learned in a week last July might in the ordinary way have taken them fifteen years to learn" (177). Accordingly plans were drawn up for the removal of black workers from the corrupting scenes of a white strike to their rural homes. The Native Recruiting Corporation and the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, who were responsible for recruiting most black mineworkers, co-operated in the scheme (178).

Also in response to the reaction of blacks to the strike the Government appointed the Native Grievances Commission. The reasons for doing so are explicitly expressed in a emeorandum on the strike drawn up by the Native Affairs Department:-

> "Certain leading delegates to the South African Native Congress had been present in Johannesburg and on the Reef during the disturbances. The disabilities under which natives were working formed one of the subjects discussed at the meeting of the Congress. Simultaneously with these gatherings the demands of the white miners were being formulated for submission to the government by the Federation of Traders. Having reason to believe that this lead would be followed by certain native agitators and realising how lamentable it would be were the government to be placed in the position of having to make concessions to natives as a result of demands being formulated in respect of known grievances the Director recommended that such a move be anticipated and that a commission be appointed" (180).

7.1 Economic Commission 1914

Similarly in an attempt to allay unrest the Government appointed a commission to investigate the position of white workers. The Economic Commission (UG 12'14) reported on the seventeenth of January 1914. It generally opposed Government interference in industry. It recommended a factory act to regulate conditions of labour in factories, and it recommended legislation providing for one day off a week for industrial workers. It opposed the colour bar, the setting of minimum

175 'Justice' 178 3/1418/13 Secretary Mines to Minister Mines
176 Commission. Evidence of J.P. Fitzpatrick
177 UG12'14 para 95
178 GNLB 114
179 NA 5 mm 1870/13/F2 Secretary Native Affairs to Secretary Justice 6.12.13
180 NA 208 210/14/F473

wages and the contract system on the mines. The Commission recommended legislation to encourage the development of voluntary conciliation boards on which employees would be represented by trade union officials and which would be responsible for negotiating wages and conditions. The legislation they envisaged would have gone further than the 1909 Act so that it would have explicitly recognised the role of trade unions in industry and would encourage the development of standing Conciliation Boards, but it did not go so far as the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 in that it favoured recognition of trade unions but it did not propose legislation which would encourage trade unions and thus it did not envisage the legislative enactment of voluntary agreements and their possible extension to the rest of the industry, both of these are provisions of the 1924 Act.

7.2 Government Reaction - Co-option

Following the strike, in the light of reports by government officials closely in touch with the trade union movement, the government considered legislative measures to ensure industrial peace.

In September 1913 the Secretary for Mines and Industries forwarded reports of the Inspectors of Mines on the industrial crisis of 1913 in which they suggested reasons for the dispute and ways of averting another in the future (182). The Inspectors for Johannesburg, Boksburg and Pretoria were unanimous in their opinion that trade unions should be given legislative recognition. The Inspector for Krugersdorp differed. He was worried about "the effect upon the native - the true labourer of this land - when he hears of the government recognition of trade unions ... Will he not also demand some of the fruits of such legislation" (183). His report also claimed that legislative recognition of trade unions in Britain had led to more strikes and "labour tyranny". In his notes on this report the Government Mining Engineer pointed out that "recognition" implies "regulation" and that the whole report basically represented the attitude of the mine owners.

The Inspector of White Labour had suggested that trade unions should be given statutory recognition by inserting a clause in the Factory Bill of 1911 (184), but opposition to such a move in 1911 was as strong as in 1913. The 1914 Economic Commission reported that they had "met with many employers who seem strangely averse to have any dealings with trade union officials" (185). Amongst some sections of the mining industry oppositions to trade unionism persisted even after several years of formal recognition which began in 1915 (186).

In the aftermath of the 1913 strike the reasons for recognising trade unions became more urgent. As already pointed out the government was becoming concerned at the ascendancy of the "extremist"elements in the labour movement and the permeation of these views into the rank and file. The Government Mining Engineer in a letter to the Minister of Mines pointed out that labour legislation must recognise this position and :-

> "as you have already stated:, it must be our objectto attempt to drive a wedge between the bona fide workman and the class of persons holding these views" (187)

182 MNW 234 mm 1074/14
183 ibid Inspector of Mines Krugersdorp to Government Mining Engineer 9.9.13
184 MNW 51 Inspector White Labour to Secretary Mines 30.5.11
185 UG 12'14 p. 88
186 MNW 395 mm 2762/17 Secretary Mines and Industries to IWL. 1.11.17
187 MNW 234 mm 1074/14 GME to Minister of Mines Sept 1913

The Economic Commission of 1914 was explicit about how the recognition of t unions could help to achieve this:-

> "Trade Union organisation is impossible without officials, and offici being of influence in their trade unions are the natural persons to bring into negotiations with employers. Moreover, the official is m likely to take the business point of view, and examine the situation calmly, than the workman who has some personal grievance rankling in mind. Finally, it's certain that, recognised or not, labour organis will continue among white men. All experience proves it, our experi proves also that organisation in the open, made sober by recognition a very different thing from organisation which has to fight against tempt or antagonism, and may be compelled to keep its organisation s It is the latter form of organisation which is so pecularly liable t foster extreme and even revolutionary doctrines"(188).

The advanced views of the Economic Commission of 1914 are apparent in its re mendation of the recognition of the Federation of Trades. As they pointed o even the most liberal employers were wary of the Federation. The Commissio that such fears were unfounded and the Federation if recognised would act as second line of defence against industrial war" (190)

Towards the end of 1913 a bill "to provide for the registration and regulati trade unions "was introduced (191). This provided for the official registra of trade unions. Trade unions must supply to the registrar the name of the the names of officers, address, details of funds and what they are used for Under clause 7 (1) any branch of a trade union could apply for registration separate union. This clause would tend to lead to a strengthening of local autonomy in trade unions and prevent the development of powerful centralized organisations and makes it less likely that a strong officialdom would devel and become entrenched. Clause 9 provided for the possibility of amalgamatio two or more unions in the same trade or industry but stipulated that the con at least two thirds of the whole membership of each trade union must be obta The Act prescribed penalties for any attempt to intimidate people to join un and made trade union officials liable for any illegal acts of the union.

This bill must be seen in the context of the other labour legislation introd in the wake of the 1913 strike, particularly the proposed Industrial Prevent Bill. This bill would have superceded the 1909 Industrial Dispute Act, whic applied to the Transvaal. Of this act the Inspector of White Labour had sai

> "generally speaking, this Act, for all intents and purposes, has been dead letter on our statutes" (193).

188 UG 12'14 p. 88
190 UG 12'14 para.90
191 MNW 421 mm 1649/18 C62 (2) '14
192 ibid Clause 4 (1)
193 MNW 543 mm 3431/20 IWL to chief IWL 17.12.20

The Bill was intended to be more far reaching and strict in its provisions than the 1909 Act (194). The intention was to stop sympathy strikes and make general strikes impossible (195). To achieve this some interesting provisions were included in the act. Section 7 aimed to restrict strikes by isolating them and removing the principle cause of rioting. To achieve this it forbad picketting and made it illegal for employers to introduce strike breakers. The bill prohibited a strike until one month after a Disputes Board had reported on the dispute and it was to be compulsory to ballot all employees and obtain a majority before a strike could be called. A new clause was later inserted under which at any time during the course of a strike on the application of five employees the registrar of trade unions could call for a ballot the results of which would be published in the Government Gazette and national newspapers and sent to the employers and trade unions. Under Section 43 it was illegal for light, power, water or sanitary employees to strike and illegal for anyone to strike if this might endanger life on expose valuable property to injury (e.g. in the case of a mine strike it would be illegal to prevent pumping services). The penalty for infringement of these provisions was a maximum of two years hard labour. If a trade union transgressed the Act all officials were liable.

The most novel clauses compared with the 1909 Act, were those providing for the establishment of standing conciliation boards in any industry. The boards were to consist of equal number of employer and employee representatives. The bill implicitly recognised trade unions by allowing for the representation of employees by trade union officials of a registered trade union or by a representative elected by a ballot of all employees (196).

In September 1913 the parliamentary draughtsmen were urged to hurry with the bill because the Minister considered it urgent and wanted it in a form to put before Cabinet (197). On the 26th of January the Chamber of Mines wrote to the Secretary for Mines and Industries:-

> "the recent general strike offers additional reasons necessitating the passing of Acts dealing with these questions and I am therefore directed to urge that this legislation be proceeded with in the coming session".

The letter went on to urge an amendment to the trade union bill making it compulsory to register (198). The Transvaal Coal Owners Society wrote to the Secretary for Mines and Industries supporting the bill and demanding heavy penalties for strikes, intimidation and violence, inciting to strike and "go-slows" (199).

Organisations of labour were not so enthusiastic. Protest meetings in May 1914 of the labour Party and the trade unions passed resolutions condemning the Industrial disputes Bill and the Riotors Assemblies Bill (discussed below) (200).

However, the Industrial Disputes Bill and Trade Union Bill were not passed. They had been merged into one bill the Industrial Dispute and Trade Union bill and passed through two readings in the House of Assembly and were then referred to select committee. The Bill was revised in select committee and referred to a committee of the whole House for amendment. It re-emerged as the Industrial Disputes and Labour Bureaux Bill with clauses on the registration of trade unions removed (201). The Bill however failed to get through Senate before the end of the session and was not reintroduced in the next session.

194 'Justice' 178 3/1418/13 Secretary Mines and Industries to Secretary Justice 12.12.13

195 MNW 217 mm 4256/13 Secretary Mines and Industries to Secretary Justice 19.9.13 and 22.9.13

196 This clause was disliked by some employers. The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce for example wrote to the Secretary for Mines and Industries on the second of May 1914 demanding that representatives should always be chosen by full ballot of employees.

197 MNW 217 mm 4256/13 Secretary Mines and Industries to Secretary Justice 19.9.13

198 ibid. TCM to Secretary Mines and Industries 26.1.14

199 ibid 22.1.14

200 MNW 217 mm 4256/13 Petition to Governor General PM 1/1/119 Kimberley CNLP to PM

Apart from the clauses in the trade unions and industrail disputes bill dealing with strikes and preventing picketting the Government also considered more general measures to prevent a reoccurance of the rioting of July 1913. In their demands to the government after the 1913 strike the trade unionists included a demand for the repeal of Law 6 of 1894 under which the meeting of the 4th of July had been prohibited. The Public Meetings and Disturbances Bill drafted at the end of 1913 would have repealed Law 6 of 1894 but would itself have more effectively enforced its provisions and made them applicable to the whole Union (202). The Bill was redrafted after the strike of January 1914. It was passed in July 1914 as the Riotous Assemblies Act. Under this Act any Magistrate acting under authority of the Minister of Justice has power to prohibit any gathering, if he thinks the public peace is in danger, and can prevent access to such a place. The act governs the use of force by state authorities against illegal gatherings. Chapter 2 of the act totally prohibits picketting. Labour party efforts to have an amendment to the bill, which would follow the example of the British Trade Dispute Act of 1906 and legalize peaceful picketting, were unsuccessful. The Bill also included clauses to prevent the intimidation of people in order to get them to join a trade union. The bill also provided for the liability of all trade union officials for misdemeanors by the trade union. It prohibited the breaking of contracts by essential service employees. The Act also provided for the deportation of "undesirables". After appeals by members from all sections of the House the Act repealed part 2 of the Peace preservation Ordinance of 1902 which conforced arbitary powers of arrest and detention for three weeks without access to the courts of people suspected for treason or sedition. The leaders arested in January 1914 had been held under this ordinance. The Act also provided that, if the Attorney General determines that it is necessary, offenders may be tried by Special Criminal Court, not by jury. (203).

The seemingly successful strike of 1913 did not lead to many legislative gains for the white workers. Their demand for the repeal of the 1894 Act was acceeded to only because and far more repressive measure was passed in its place. Some of the other demands led to discussion between the Mines Department and trade union officials but few of them were passed.

A private members' bill, backed by the labour party, which envisaged the setting up of wage boards for each industry equally representative of employers and employees in the industry which could determine a minimum wage for each industry was introduced in February 1914. Haggar of the Labour Party had in fact asked the government to consider the formation of wage boards before the strike in May 1913 which had been agreed to. After discussion in the house in February 1914 the bill was withdrawn.

One of the workers' demands in 1913 had been for a Factory Act. A Factory Bill was introduced in 1913. Soon after Union the government had considered introducing legislation controlling factories. In 1911 the Inspector of White Labour drafted a factory act and commented that the passing of such a measure and the setting up of wage boards would help solve the problem of industrial disputes (205). The

201 MNW 421 mm 1699/18 Under Secretary for Mines and Industries to CIWL 2.4.18
202 PM 1/1/108
203 PM 1/1/119 Notes on Riotous Assemblies Act by Law Adviser
204 Diamond Fields Advertiser 17.1.14 PM/1/1/108
205 MNW 51 IWL Report 1.5.11

1913 Factory Bill drew considerable criticism from employers. At first the act proposed a basic 50 hour week for all adult males (though many exceptions were made e.g. for seasonal work, continuous process industry etc). After protests this was altered to a 54 hour week (206). The bill not only proposed restricted hours it also stipulated work conditions, provided for the registration of factories, numbers of employees and work done in the factories. The act contained provisions attempting to prevent evasion by the worst sweating employers the "putters-out" to home workers(207). In drawing up the legislation the mines department made full use of studies of similar legislation in other countries and discovered that rather than having an adverse affect industry had flourished under such legislation (208). However, this bill also failed to pass.

Immediately after the 1914 strike a very harsh bill somewhat euphemistically called 'The Workmens' Protection Act' was introduced (209). This made it an offence to interfere with any person to induce them to strike. This was intended to prevent 'pulling-out'. It would be an offence to "interfere" with anybody in an attempt to induce them to join a trade union. It made it an offence to enter premises and interview workers about their conditions or terms of employment. "Interference" had a wide definition and included the use of "opprobious epithets" i.e. like the word scab. Breach of contract was to be a criminal offence for essential service workers or where it was liable to lead to loss of life or damage to machinery. The bill made it illegal for trade unions to punish a member who continued working during a strike by fines, removal of privileges or explusion. The bill, if enforced, would have made it extremely difficult for trade unions to maintain and control their membership and would have made expansion almost impossible. The bill was not passed but various clauses were merged into the Riotous Assemblies Act.

Two measures which had been demanded were passed. The Workmen's Compensation Act provided compensation for accidents at work whether or not the employer was personally negligent. The Act applied to all workers except black mineworkers. It did not provide compensation for industrial disease (210). The Act consolidated the various acts of the provinces. It was passed in July 1914. The other act was the Workmen's Wages Protection Act, passed in June 1914. In terms of this act workmen could apply to the principal (i.e. the person on whose behalf work has been done) as soon as his wages fall due. The intention of the Act was to cover those cases, numerous is the building industry for example, where the contractor did not have sufficient money to cover the workers' wages or disappeared without paying them.

By the end of 1914 the government had still not evolved a long term strategy for dealing with white workers. The measures which had been introduced to regulate the position of trade unions had not been passed. The only legislation which dealt with the relations between employers and white workers the 1907 Act, although criticised as a "dead letter" remained. The Industrial Disputes and Trade Union Bills were not reintroduced. Possibly this was partly due tocontinuing opposition to the recognition of trade unions among some sections of mining capital (211).

206 MNW 238 mm 1230/I4 IWL to Secretary Mines and Industry 20.1.14
207 MNW 214 mm 4163/13 Secretary Mines and Industry to Chamber of Commerce Cape Town.
208 MNW 238 mm 1230/14 and mm 4163/13 IWL Report 20.1.14 also Report of Professor of Sociology from USA
209 PM 1/1/108 29.1.14
210 PM 1/1/14 1/1/108 The Act was amended in 1917 to provide for lead poisoning and mercury poisoning.
211 UG 12'14 p. 88

Perhaps also the measures no longer seemed so urgent after the defeat of the extremists in January 1914 and the blows to trade unionism inflicted then. As the Secretary for Mines and Industries ideologically expressed it immediately after the Government victory in 1914; "it is very desirable that the Government should not depart from its industrial programme of legislation, as many people would, I think, like it to do now that it has won a victory over the extremists. It seems to me more important than ever that the government should adhere steadily to the programme which it has set before itself in the country. In order to avoid the accusation of being vindictive" (212). However, it was apparently no longer necessary to "adhere" to its programme and the Government continued in its former, established programme of tolerating trade unions but granting them no special position in industry and society. Both government and employers no doubt felt safer now that the Riotous Assemblies Act was on the statutes and they had means to control trade union activities because officials were now liable for transgressions by trade union members of the Act (213). As far as the white workers were concerned the attempts to obtain a 48 hour week minimum wage, paid holidays, prohibition on Sunday Work and an apprenticeship system by legislative means had failed.

212 MNW 217 mm 4256/17 Secretary Mines and Industry to Transvaal Coal Owners' Society 23-1-14

213 see. TCM AR xlvii

Abbreviations used

ASE Amalgamated Society of Engineer
(Later called AEU - Amalgamated Engineering Union)

ASRHS Amalgamated Society of Railway and Harbour Servants

DC Archive of the Secretary of Defence

Disturbances Commission Report and Evidence of the Witwatersrand Disturbances Commission C7112

DRA District Rifle Association

Federation Transvaal Federation of Trades

I.W.L. Inspector of White Labour

'Justice' Records of the Department of Justice

MNW Records of the Department of Mines and Industries

NA Records of the Native Affairs Department

PM Records of the Prime Minister

R.D.M. Rand Daily Mail

SAMR Records of the South African Mounted Riflemen

SAP South African Police

SAR South African Railways

TCM Transvaal Chamber of Mines

TMA Transvaal Miners Association

8. Further Unrest after the 1913 Strike

In December 1913 there was a strike of engine drivers on the coal mines of Natal. After negotiations they agreed to return to work. Some increase in pay had been granted but the demand for decreased hours was not conceded (214). Later in December the Natal branch of the TMA struck work with the authorization of the Johannesburg executive after management had refused to reinstate four TMA officials who had been dismissed. The strike continued until after the railway strike of January 1914. After a dead-lock had been reached in negotiations the TMA sent an official, McKerrall, down from the Rand on 1 January 1914 to help resolve the dispute. According to the Inspector of White Labour, McKerrall was extremely belligerent and uncompromising. McKerrall claimed to be in contact with Poutsma, the General Secretary of the railway workers' union ASRHS, and said that if the owners did not accept the TMA ultimatum, which included immediate reinstatement of the TMA men, then the railwaymen and the white workers of the Witbank colliery would strike in sympathy (215). There is evidence of government fears of this strike spreading to the gold mines on the Rand. (216).

In October 1913 thousands of Indians, led by Gandhi, took part in a passive resistence campaign against the £3 tax imposed on them.

The campaign took the form of courting arrest, by means of illegal marches for example A mass march took place from Natal into the Transvaal, from which Indians were prohibited. By the end of October the action had spread to the coal mines (217) and by 28 October over 3000 Indians were on strike (218). As usual employers and government officials refused to believe that the Indians had any good reason or any serious desire to strike. They did so only because of "intimidation" by agitators. (219) In an ingenious move the authorities arrested "ring leaders" and sentenced them to hard labour and had the mine compounds proclaimed to be jails and so forced the Indian labour force back to work under police supervision (220)

214 MNW 238 mm 1295/14
215 ibid
216 DC 1154 5422 Lieutenant Colonel SAMR to 050 Pretoria 7.1.14

By the end of November Indians in the factories of Durban and Pietermaritzburg and on sugar estates had joined the strike (221). By the beginning of December large numbers of strikers had returned to work. Even so, there were then over 17 000 workers still out (222). According to the chief magistrate of Durban, the use of armed force to suppress the strike (it was also alleged that prisoners in jail were flogged) was not to intimidate the workers and break the strike but, 'predictably',to prevent "agitators" intimidating them into striking. He is very candid on the reasons for the many arrests. These were "necessary to show to the natives that there existed at hand the necessary force to handle any number of strikers " (223).

The strikes gradually petered out and, resorting to already familiar tactics, the government appointed the Indian Enquiry Commission on 11 December 1913.

9. The 1914 Railwaymen's Strike.

In October 1913 when the threat of 'industrial action' on the Rand had receded somewhat the Minister of Railways, Burton, issued circulars on the necessity to retrench labour in the railway workshops (224). On 24 December the railway administration announced that in the interests of economy it would be necessary to retrench even more labour (225). Eventually 673 workers were retrenched.

9.1 Another Commission of Enquiry

At the time that these retrenchments were announced the Railway Commission of Enquiry into railwaymen's grievances was in session. This had been appointed under the agreement of 4 July in terms of Section 21 of the Railway Act of 1912. The Commission was enquiring into (a) Introduction of an 8 hour day (b) A minimum wage for white adult employees of 8s per day (c) Revision of local allowances (d) Abolition of piecework (e) Better payment for salaried staff (f) Extra payment for overtime (g) Severity of punishment (h) Decentralisation of shop management. The chairman was C.G. Ward, appointed by the government. There were to be two other members, one appointed by the administration, the other by a ballot of all railway employees (226). The ASRHS, after deliberating on whether or not they should ignore the commission, decided to recommend the railway workers to vote for H.J. Poutsma the General Secretary as their representative (227). He was elected in October 1913 (228).

217 'Justice' 180/4/572/13. Natal Collieries to Minister Interior 20.10.13
218 ibid. Attorney General to Secretary Justice 23.10.13
219 ibid. Chairman Joint Meeting of Natal Sugar Association and Coal Owners Society to Minister Justice 8.11.13
220 ibid. Governor General to Secretary of State 19.11.13
221 ibid. Chief Magistrate Durban to Justice Department 24.11.13
222 ibid. General Lukin Control Officer to Defence Department 2.12.13
223 'Justice' 181 4/627/13. Report of Chief Magistrate Durban.
224 Smuts op. cit. p. 18
225 Creswell op. cit. p. 23

The government had feared a railwaymen's strike after the 1913 strike but none took place. The commission became the focus of the railwaymen's interest and hopes. When retrenchments were announced talk of a strike to halt retrenchments and obtain redress for long standing grievances spread.

9.2 Background to the Railway Strike

Several commissions had examined the grievances of the railwaymen. Repeatedly their recommendations had been ignored. In 1910 the Commission noted that the recommendations of the 1907 Commission not been implemented (229).

The 1910 Commission noted the extreme antipathy of the General Manager of the Central SAR, William Hoy, later General Manager of the SAR, to trade unions or any form of consultation with the men; they quoted from among statements made by him;

> "If you try to meet them the whole lot will combine against you".
> "The moment I meet them they are not satisfied until they have got my hands and my feet and my whole body". (230)

Bearing in mind this attitude the proviso at the beginning of the Commission's report is not surprising:

> "At the very outset your Commissioners wish to place on record the great fear of the whole staff who gave evidence that their evidence would inevitably cause them to be victimised". (231)

In this connection the Commissioner reported on two "coincidences" (232) which occurred when he was taking evidence at Volksrust and Waterval-boven. Members of the railway CID visited both places at the same time he did.

Despite the recommendation of the 1912 Commission on Railway Grievances (233) that the administration should allow railway workers to be represented by the ASRHS if that was what the workers wanted it was not until after the 1913 strike that the administration even considered recognizing trade unions.

One of the most oft repeated complaints to all the commissions was the severity of punishment meted out for offences. The 1910 Commissioner recommended that an appeal board by instituted (234). The 1912 Commissioner considered that the proceedure laid down by the 1912 Railway Act whereby appeal could be made to the General Manager and then, if no solution was forthcoming, to the Railway Board, was sufficient. (235) The ASRHS wanted an Appeal Board instituted with equal representation of employees. (236). After the 1913 Strike the railway workers put forward this demand again and an Appeal Board was instituted which was eventually given legal recognition in the Railway and Harbours Strike Service Amendment Act of 1914. (237). Even so the complaint about the severity of punishment still remained. Under the 1912 Act employees who "deserted", were disobedient, negligent etc. were liable to dismissal with loss of all superannuation contributions. (238). When the 1912 Act was being debated in the House this clause had been called "downright robbery" (239). The 1912 Commission recommended

226 Government Gazette 15.8.13
227 'Justice' 193 3/18/14 Annual Conference ASRHS August 1913
228 Government Gazette 11.10.13
229 Report of Commission of inquiry into complaints of CSAR Staff 190 p. 103
230 ibid. p. 110
231 ibid. p. 2
232 ibid. p. 3
233 UG 64'12 p. 135
234 1910 Commission p. 56
235 UG 64'12 p. 130
236 'South African Railway and Harbour Servants Review 1/3/12
237 PM 1/1/19 Notes of Law Adviser on SAR Strike Amendment Act
238 UG 64'12
239 'Natal Mercury' 3.2.12

that a worker should only be liable to forfeit contributions for fraud or dishonesty (240).

Employee representatives to all the commissions asked for the establishment of an 8 hour day. The commissions generally reported that for a service such as the railway service it would be impossible to have an 8 hour day for all workers. They all agreed that the hours at work of employees should be reduced "as much as possible". The 1910 Commission mentioned people working up to 18 hours at a stretch (241). The 1914 Commission calculated the average number of hours of running staff for a month they obtained figures of 302.4 (Cape Town) 284.6 (Kimberley) 307.3 (Port Elizabeth) 304.3 (East London) 304.1 (Bloemfontein) 307.1 (Durban) 306.3 (Johannesburg) 293.3 (Pretoria). This gives an average of about 73 hour per week. (245). The ASRHS argued that the introduction of the 8 hour day would mean the employment of unemployed people and greater efficiency which would mean that it would not result in increased costs (246). The 1914 Commission recommended that wherever possible the hours of work should be reduced to 8 per day and that the Administration should investigate ways of reducing hours. (247) The Administration had already introduced a 48 hour week for artizans. (248).

In accordance with their demand for reduced hours the ASRHS asked for enhanced rates for overtime (249). The 1910 Commission found that workers were actually paid a lower rate for overtime. Their pay was calculated on the basis of a substantive rate plus a daily district allowance according to the area they lived in. Overtime was paid on the substantive rate (250). The 1912 Commission recommended the payment of time and a quarter for weekday overtime and time and a half for Sunday overtime based on the substantive rate of pay (251). In their minority report the employees representatives recommended the same rates but based on the consolidated pay (252). On the 1st of January 1913 overtime rates were introduced, for artisans only, based on the substantive pay rates (253).

In their evidence to the commission the trade unions were unanimous in their demand for the abolition of 'piecework' in the workshops. The system existing was not, strictly speaking, piecework. It was a bonus time system. A time was calculated for every piece of work. The worker was paid a bonus if he completed a piece in less time. Trade unions claimed that this system led to numerous unsatisfactory results. They said that the rates tended to be based on the rate of the youngest most efficient men, which acted against the interests of older workers. They said that the system led to sweating, shoddy work, to competition between the men and a tendency to drive the rates down and prevented the proper training of apprentices because men did not have time to attend to them. (254). The 1910 Commission agreed with the trade unions and recommended the abolition of 'piecework'. (255). The 1912 Commission said that, although the opinion of the men at every centre they visited was unanimously against 'piecework', they thought that insufficient evidence had been given of alleged abuses and decided not to recommend its abolition. They did recommend various safeguards to prevent competition leading to rate cutting and bad work. (256). The 1914 Commission also reported against the abolition of piecework and made recommendations to safeguard the men from rate cutting (257).

240 UG 64'12 p. 120
241 1910 Commission p. 104
245 1914 Commission p. 26
246 1914 Commssion Minority Report J.M. Nield p. 102
247 ibid. p. 98
248 ibid. parag. 12
249 ibid p. 100
250 1910 Commission p. 103
251 UG 64'12 p. 61
252 ibid p. 67
253 1914 Commission p. 100
254 UG 64'12 p. 78
255 1910 Commission p. 51
256 UG 64'12 p. 84
257 1914 Commission p. 99

The ASRHS wanted the whole basis of organisation of the staff in the railway service altered. They wanted the regulation of pay, conditions and discipline to be governed by Parliament. Under the 1912 Act the General Manager was given the right to make regulations governing pay, conditions etc. They also wanted clauses in the Act, which empowered the Administration to discipline workers for offences even after they had been found innocent by a criminal court, to be deleted (258),

The 1912 Commission considered grievances of individuals and groups. It made hundreds of recommendations on anomalies of pay, hours, conditions, pensions etc. in the different services in the provinces before Union.The 1912 Railway Act was supposed to iron out the differences. One of the demands of the railway workers after the 1913 strike was for the implementation of the recommendations made by the 1912 Commission (259). Changes made by the 1912 Act and the continuance of anomalies was one of the sources of grievance felt by the railway workers in 1914.

As government employees the railway workers were not immune to the fluctuations of the capitalist economy. For a start the South Africa Act explicitly stated that the railways must be run on "business principles". Even without this stricture the railway administration could hardly have run the railways in such a way as to impede the profitability of private industry in the country, especially not the revenue producing gold mining industry. As the Commission in 1910 pointed out, all the grievances of the worker arose from the aim of the Administration to run the railways at the lowest possible cost (260).

Even so, as Government employees whose terms of employment were governed by Act of Parliament the railway workers faced peculiar difficulties in organizing. The 1912 Railway Act (which consolidated the Acts governing railway workers in the various provinces) provided for pension and sickness funds. For employees taken in to the permanent staff the act supposedly gave security of tenure- except for negligence, transgression of regulations etc. One of the focal points of organisation of working class people has been to provide those social needs which the capitalist system has denied them. Trade unions often began as benefit societies and this remained a major part of their function. For railway workers the problems of providing for sickness, unemployment and old age were catered for by act of parliament. The 1912 Act gave the Administration power to make regulations on the wages and conditions of employment of railwaymen. The organisation of railwaymen therefore directly focussed on the question of conditions of employment.

258 'South African Railway and Harbour Servants Review' 1.3.12 alsoNurahs' circular to senate 12-2-23 in Private Secretary of Colonel Cresswell Box2
259 MNW 192 mm 2578/13
260 1910 Commission p- 108
261 'Justice' 214 3/372/15. ASRHS General Secretary Frank Nettleton to Minister Justice 22.4.11
262 Economic Commission 1925 v 8 Evidence of W. Moore. Nurahs General Secretary Q24.597
263 'Justice' 214 3/372/15 Frank Nettleton to Minister 22.4.11
264 'Railways and Harbours Gazette' quoted in RDM 1.7.13

Under the 1912 Act the railway men were prohibited from striking. The Amalgamated Society of Railway and Harbour Servants (ASRHS) constitution therefore contains no clauses on strike matters. The Act also forbad the active participation of railway workers in politics. The ASRHS tried to organise among all sections of railwaymen including unskilled labourers and artizans. Most of the railway workshop artizans belonged to one of the craft unions but some also belonged to the ASRHS. By 1911 the ASRHS claimed 7 000 members (261). Apart from the difficulties of organising due to the different section of railway workers spread out at different centres over several thousand miles of railway line the difficulties were aggravated by the complex grading system instituted by the Administration. By 1925 there were over 600 grades i.e. a complex finely divided hierarchy had been created which led to rivalry among railway workers and quiescence due to the fear of being victimised by not being promoted (262).

The ASRHS was moderate in ideology claiming to be non political, to oppose strikes and being pledged to obtain its demands through arbitration and appeal boards (263). In an article in their magazine on the 1913 strike they gave verbal support to the strikers, hoped for a quick settlement, condemned strikes as a waste which must be avoided at all costs and wrote that the workers must try to improve their position through the ballot box by getting the right politician in parliament (264). In other words they refused to strike in support of the gold workers. Their contribution was limited to a one-day sympathy strike on the day the funeral of those shot was held. For their "fairplay" and "moderacy" in 1913 the ASRHS were congratulated by the Mayor of Bloemfontein when he opened their annual conference. (265).

However, there were signs that the ASRHS was becoming more militant. After the 1913 strike the ASRHS, TMA and the Federation pledged themselves to co-operate with one another (266). In July 1913 a new union, the S.A. Transport Workers' Union, was formed, after a section split off from the ASRHS (267). The new union was avowedly political in its objectives. At the Annual Conference in Bloemfontein the defection of the former General Secretary to the new union was discussed. The conference voted in Favour of the deletion of the "non-political" clause in the constitution (268).

From October 1913 the ASRHS expended its energies trying to have the Administrations decision on retrenchment reversed. They sent deputations to the Minister of Railways in an attempt to have the decision re-examined (269). Although skeptical of the need for economy, the executive committee of the ASRHS told the Minister that if it was necessary all the ASRHS members would be willing to sacrifice one hour per day rather than retrench any labour (270). The ASRHS was in contact with all branches and obtained details on those who were to be retrenched. From this information they concluded that the Government was untruthful in its guarantee to retrench new workers only. In fact the ASRHS claimed that many men of long service were to lose their jobs (271). The Executive saw this as an indirect attack on wages, the highest paid were being retrenched and they thought this would be followed by a general reduction of wages.

265 'Justice' 143 3/18/14 Annual Conference Report August 1913 ASRHS.
266 MNW 238 mm 1295/14 Secretary Mines Report to Minister 10.1.14
267 'The Worker' 3.7.13
268 'Justice' 193 3/18/14 Annual Conference ASRHS.
269 'Justice' 178 3/1468/13
270 ibid. Meeting Railways square 7.1.14
271 ibid

It is difficult to determine why the 1914 strike occured precisely when it did. Up to the end of 1913 there was no official correspondence amongst the unions about a strike nor were any preparations made (272). As late as the 29th of December the General Secretary of the ASRHS, Poutsma, was preparing for a resumption of the tour of the Grievances Commission of which he was a member. The strike began on the eight of January. Not until the 5th of January were the secretaries at the centres who had been notified of the impending visit of the Commission notified of the concellation by the chairman (273). The Federation were not notified of the likelihood of a strike until the sixth of January (274). On that date the ASRHS held a mass meeting in Pretoria Town Hall at which they resolved that "having heard the Governments motives for the retrenchment now taking place" they would strike from the eighth (275). On the seventh Poutsma addressed a mass meeting of about 400 railwaymen at Braamfontein who unanimously decided to strike (276). On the same day Poutsma addressed a meeting in Market Square Pretoria at which about 1 000 people were present (277). At this meeting Kendall the organizing secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) promised full support if the ASRHS struck solidly. He also said that the ASE would want to put forward their own demands including one for the abolition of piecework. In support of the railwaymen the building workers of Pretoria at a meeting on the eleventh of January attended by about 1 000 people decided to strike. The Typographical Union and the Bakers Union followed suit (278). The TMA announced on the thirteenth that their ballot had resulted in a majority in favour of striking (279). The railwaymen at Pretoria formed a strike committee and notified other centres that they must come out on strike.

The ASRHS executive had not made the most basic preparations for a strike. They had made no attempt to discover the attitude of the non-union mean and to see if they would support a strike. The ASRHS membership was estimated at 15 000 out of a total of over 30 000 white workers on the railways (280). No attempt had been made to ballot trade unionists at the various centres. The secretary of the ASRHS at East London was horrified on receiving notification to strike. He said they had no idea of an intention to strike,and consequently, had made no preparation, they had no strike committee, no funds, no organisation. He said that the men at his centre were very bitter about not being consulted. They decided not to strike but to wait for a proper ballot of the membership and he concluded his letter to the Pretoria Strike Committee "disgusted we are and I think disgusted we will remain" (281). The General Secretary replied in very mild tones with little attempt to persuade the centre to come out and little sense of urgency about the situation (282). One can assume that a similar reaction of disgust was felt at other centres at the autocratic methods of the Executive. According to the Magistrate at Volksrust the men there also refused to strike and were very indignant at being ordered out without consultation and against the wish of the majority. In fact they all struck work on the ninth of January (283).

272 'Justice' 193 3/18/14 SAP report on records of ASRHS, TMA Engine Drivers etc
273 ibid
274 'Justice' 192 Rough Minute Book of Transvaal Federation
275 'Justice' 192 3/35/14 SAP report
276 RDM 7.1.14
277 'Transvaal Leader' 7.1.14 Also 'Justice' 178 3/1468/13 SAP Report
278 'Diamond Field Advertiser' 17.1.14
279 ibid
280 'Transvaal Leader' 7.1.14
281 'Justice' 192 3/35/14 E. London Secretary Tp Poutsma 8.1.14
282 ibid. General Secretary to Secretary E. London 12.1.14
283 'Justice' 191 Magistrate Volksrust report.

After consulting Poutsma, the TMA executive, the South African Council of the ASE and the Federation Executive held a General Committee meeting on the eleventh (284). They discussed what support should be given to the railway workers. The TMA representatives opposed a general strike on the grounds that they had not got the finances to support the workers. (285). The Executive of the Federation was also split. Some of them favoured caution after a report from Mason on the organisation of the railwaymen in which he said that he thinks "Poutsma miscalculated things" (286). However, others, including Walmsley, Bain, Crawford and Kendall favoured immediate practical support. The Federation Executive decided on the eighth that the decision on a general strike must be left to the General Committee meeting of the eleventh, but, even so, they formed a strike committee straight away. The G.C. meeting on the eleventh decided to hold a ballot of members to decide on whether to call a sympathy strike. The G.C. recommended the members to vote for a strike. The number participating in the ballots were small only a few thousand. The ASE, the Amalgamated Society of Carperters and Joiners and the Masons Society ballot resulted in a large proportion in favour of a strike. The Federation called a general strike from the fourteenth of January. The Pretoria Strike Committee had asked for moral and financial support and they condemned the Federation in calling a general strike and said this would not help them and was only likely to defeat their ends(287). When the Federation passed its motion in favour of a general strike as far as they were concerned control of the strike has passed to them. On the ninth of January Poutsma and other leaders were arrested. The Federation passed a resolution saying it would not consider negotiation with the government until these men were released (288). Several days later the Pretoria Strike Committee and the Federation were still bickering about who would participate in negotiation with the government. The Pretoria Strike Committee said they deplored the general strike and wanted the final say in all decisions. The Federation countered by saying they called the general strike after Poutsma had asked for support (289). However, the government had made its preparation and had no intention of negotiating (290).

One may ask how did the leaders manage to misinterpret the situation so completely. Why did the Federation leaders presume that they could call on workers to support the strike? Why did Poutsma and the Executive Committee of the ASRHS think that a strike would be supported with so little preparation? Part of the problem in assessing this is the problem of understanding what the feelings and reactions of the white workers actually were.

Under Martial Law, imposed on the fourteenth of January, the press was strictly censored. When the Transvaal Chronicle transgressed the limits they were threatened with closure. (291). The Editor had written about the daily suppression of truth about the strike in the press, the arrest of peaceful citizens and called the official reports of the railway administration on the strike "deliberate untruths" (292). Several years after the strike, in 1917,

284 'Justice' 192 Rough Minute Book of Federation
285 ibid
286 ibid
287 'Justice' 193 3/18/14 SAS report on ASRHS papers
288 'Justice' 142 Minute Book of Federation 10.1.14
289 ibid
290 details given later
291 'Justice' 193 3/69/14 Editor of'Transvaal Chronicle' to Govenor General 15.1.14
292 ibid

when the Pretoria building worker went on strike the trade union officials refused to give any interviews to the press because of the false information printed in the press in 1914 and, in particualr, the report that the Durban workers had resumed work a week before they had (293). It makes it more difficult to trace the reactions in different centres when the press is clearly even more unreliable than usual.

I think one can say that the trade union leaders acted the way they did anticipating another lands lide strike as in 1913. As Didsbury, one of the members of the Executive of the Federation, said, on the ninth of January, the leaders of the Federation must make a decision otherwise the rank and file would take action first. (294). The trade union leader actions were partly due to pressure from some sections of the rank and file. Partly they were also due to incompetence and arrogance. The most striking failure of the trade union leaders was in their utter miscalculation of the attitude and actions of the Government.

9.3 The 1914 Strike and The South African Defence Force

Since July 1913 the Government had been preparing for another confrontation with the white working class and the trade unions. On the sixth of January while the Federation was deliberating on what action to take in support of the railwaymen the Minister of Defence, Smuts, contacted the magistrates and controlling officers to be prepared for the enforcement of the Martial Law control system (295). On the seventh Government troops occupied the station and railway workshops in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Germiston. After the ASRHS call for a general strike from the eighth the government called out the commandos. On the thirteenth of January the Minister of Defence informed the controlling officer for Johannesburg that the Martial Law proclamation would be signed at midnight if the Federation decided on a general strike and that the Government Gazette proclamation had already been signed bearing that date. (296).

In 1913 the Government had been caught by surprise by the sudden spread of the strike. The only local forces available were either strikers or sympathetic to the strikers (297). Apart from this problem the defence forces were in the midst of rearrangement in terms of the 1912 Defence Act. The government was forced to call on imperial troops. But, as previously stated the imperial Government warned them that these troops were not stationed in South Africa for this purpose.

Formation of A South African Defence Force

The union Government had been organizing their own defence force for some years. In the London Colonial Conference of 1907 emphasis had been laid on the importance of military co-operation between Britain and the colonies in order to lighten the British weapon-load (298). The size of the British garrison had been systematically reduced and by 1909 there were only 10 000 troops stationed in South Africa (299). Volunteer organisations which underwent yearly military training were built up. When one considers that the Anglo-Boer war had only finished in 1902 it is clear that the development of a Union Defence Force was a fraught political issue. The governing party after Union the South African party, was an amalgamation of the Afrikaner parties of the provinces. There

293 RDM 11.5.17
294 'Justice' 192 Federation Minute Book
295 DC 169 8/7164
296 DC 172 7232 General Smuts to control 13.1.14
297 DC 142 5115 Governor General to Secretary State 4.7.13
298 'Militaria'vi/3 1969 p. 8
299 ibid

were tensions within the party on the question of the imperial connection. This was clearly demonstrated by the Nationalist secession in 1913 and the rebellion of prominent Defence Force generals in 1914. Smuts and the Imperial faction were loyal to the Empire and were anxious that there should be no question of the defence force being built up as a force for rebellion against the Empire. As the commander of the Imperial Forces in South Africa put it;

> "Politics would have no place in the South African army, and Mr Smuts knows perfectly well the curse this has been in the other Colonial forces". (300).

As Smuts himself said:-

> "We want an organisation that shall not be Boer or British, but a South African army ... Do your duty in a broad national spirit". (301).

The Defence Act was passed on the 14th of June 1912. (302). The period from then until the 1st of July 1913 was for the demobilisation of the old volunteers and the organisation of the new permanent force, the South African Mounted Riflemen, and the Active Citizen Force (ACF). All white males between the ages of 17 and 21 were compulsorily registered and liable to be called up for the ACF which involved initials period of training and camps and drilling at regular intervals (303). The Act also provided for the formation of Defence Rifle Associations with which volunteers could register, receive a rifle and be liable for call-up by Government proclamation.

In terms of the Defence Act the Imperial troops were on loan to the Union Government until 1914 when a decision would be taken on their withdrawal (304). The Union and the Imperial Governments were aware of the likelihood of these troops being withdrawn as the prospect of a European war loomed. It was imperative that the South African state was capable of defending itself. With the threats of invasion from German S.W. Africa, white strikes and rioting and a black rebellion it was also necessary that this capacity was demonstrated, which was one effect of the governments actions in the 1914 strike.

The Imperial Government regarded the gold mining industry as a priority industry in the war (305). Therefore they were concerned that there should be no reoccurance of the strikes by black and white workers in 1913. By their actions in 1914 (described in detail later) the Union Government indicated that they also would not countenance any strike. Smuts and the Imperial faction saw their political future to lie as much in Imperial support for their future as in popular support at home. They would have agreed with the sentiment expressed in the 'Star':-

> "South Africa stands or falls by the Empire as a whole, and the battle of South Africa might be fought in the Mediteranean or in Belgium". (306)

300 ibid p. 20
301 ibid p. 28
302 ibid p. 30
303 ibid p. 34,35
304 ibid p. 44
305 PM 1/1/14 Prime Minister to President TCM 7.5.18
306 Quoted in 'Militaria' vi/3 1969 p. 17

As the President, Steyn, expressed it:-

> "Ministers venture to express the hope that the provisions of the bill will indicate to His Majesty's Government their earnest desire to establish in the Union a defence system suitable to the needs and resources of the Union and one which can play an adequate part in the defence resources of the Empire" (307).

The Union Government was still faced with the problem of promoting the enthusiasm and loyalty of the Afrikaner population for military service in a defence force which was an adjunct of the Imperialist Army. As the evidence to the 1914 Commission on the Rebellion indicates there was a lot of opposition amongst Afrikaners to becoming 'British Soldiers'. The initiation of the defence force instituted under the1912 Act occurred in 1914. The first action of the burgher forces was against the 'uitlander' urban workers with their alien ideologies. The Government wanted to use the opportunity to engender enthusiasm amongst the citizen forces for the task of defending the union and wanted to consolidate these forces..

On the fifteenth of January instructions were sent to all commanding officers:-

> "You should arrange with the Senior Officers of the Permanent Force .... to get in touch with the commandants of the commandos and ask them to invite all members of their commandos to enrol as members of Defence Rifle Associations".

Those who enrolled were allowed to keep the rifles issued to them as long as they remained members of the DRA (308).

The reports of the control officers after the 1914 strike are mainly concerned, not with the strike, but with details of mobilisation, food and supplies. The control officer for the Eastern Transvaal area reported that:-

> "Beyond the rapid mobilisation of Defence Force commandos ... no points occur to me upon which a report can be furnished (309)

A control officer For the Cape District reported:-

> "The succesful employment of the Defence Force on strike duty has not only put their organisation to a practical test but has also demonstrated to the public in a forceable manner their real utility for war purposes and, whatever the cost has been, it has been amply repaid by the general feeling of security in the community thereby engendured" (310).

9. The Martial Law Control System of 1914

Martial Law came into effect on the fourteenth of January. The controlling officers had previously drawn up plans, in consultation with local railway officials, for the defence of the railway system and the docks. (311). The armed forces prevented strikers from making any contact with those who continued working and were sufficient to prevent subotage or violent demonstration by the strikers (312). On the

307 ibid p. 27
308 DC 168 1/7164
309 DC 169 8/7164
310 ibid
311 DC 169 8/7164 Report of Control Officer
312 ibid

fourteenth most railway lines and bridges were guarded by troops. As an example of the scale of mobilisation; 1798 armed troops and police guarded the railway workshop and docks in Cape Town, on the twelfth a commando of 300 was sent to Germiston, 300 to Springs, on the fourteenth 190 armed men were sent to Waterval Boven, 240 armed men guarded the railway station, bridge and power station at Vereeniging, 50 armed men were sent to each mine in Witbank (313). Apart from troops and police "reliable" citizens were enrolled as special constables and armed to replace police called up for strike duty. The Government ensured that the Forces mobilised were treated with respect. Every day of the strike arrests were made and fines of £5 to £10 imposed for such offences as "swearing at" "booing" or even "scowling" at burghers (314).

Numerous strikers were arrested under the Preservation of Peace Ordinance of 1902 which permitted the authorities to arrest and hold incommunicado those suspected of sedition. On the tenth Poutsma and Nield of the ASRHS and Waterston (secretary of the Labour Party) were arrested (315). On the fourteenth two members of the TMA Executive were arrested in Natal. On the fifteenth "hundreds"were arrested in Benoni (316). The whole of the Pretoria Strike Committee was arrested while they were involved in discussing the strike with the Mayor of Pretoria (317). The Johannesburg strike committee was arrested after the Government had refused another offer of the Executive of the Federation to negotiate a settlement. Instead the Trades Hall was surrounded and a field gun trained on it and the controlling officer was instructed to arrest every man in the Trades Hall "using most drastic measures to do so if, after warning, the persons in that building refuse to give themselves up without violence" (317). On the sixteenth several strikers at Breyton Collieries were arrested and also two leaders of the Labour Party, Kentridge and Boydell. On the seventeenth 56 strike leaders in Volksrust and the Bloemfontein strike leaders were arrested (318). On the same date 62 people were arrested in the Labour Party offices in Johannesburg for contravening the regulations stipulating that no more than 6 people can be at a gathering (314).

Martial Law regulations gave the authorities wide powers and imposed impossible restrictions on the strikers. The regulations forbad picketting, any attempt to induce workers to strike, any interference director indirect with employees or relatives of employees of the railways, power station etc. It was prohibited to use insulting language threats or "objectionable epithets". It was illegal to be on railway premises or lines unless one was working there or had obtained a permit (320).

The Government did not intend to rely on these regulations merely as a deterrant. They intended to enforce obedience to them. A telegram was sent by the control officer for Pretoria to the officer in charge at Witbank on the thirteenth:-

> "The Minister desires most particular precautions taken to protect collieries of Witbank and requires that a guard of 50 men determined to shoot if any people try to interfere with the working of the collieries or pull out the men working there" (321).

On the same day he sent a telegram to all officers after receiving a wire from the Minister of Defence Smuts:-

> "Excess greatest possible severity. Keeping all strikers off railway and running premises. Don't hesitate to shoot if they attempt enter after warning or on apparently malicious intent. The names of persons attempting to interfere with running staff to taken and reported here" (322).

313 DC 168 8/7164
314 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 24.1.14
315 ibid 17.1.14
316 'Justice' 193 3/84/14 DC 1/7164
317 ibid
318 ibid
319 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 24.1.14
320 DC 172 7232 'Regulations'
321 SAMR 1084 215/4/3
322 ibid

Martial Law regulations were sent to Magistrates for posting up in prominent places. New notices were issued and modifications of the regulations made as the authorities saw fit. On the sixteenth a notice posted up offering a reward of £25 for reporting cases of unlawful possession of explosives. A notice forbidding the sale of alcohol was posted on the twenty third. A permit was required to sell petrol or any inflammable material. A curfew was imposed and it was necessary to obtain a permit to be out after dark. The regulation on explosives was altered so that anyone found in unlawful possession of explosives would be liable to be brought before a military tribunal and sentenced to death. Anybody found near any public building, railway premises, power station, telegraph installation etc must come forward with his hands raised and would be liable to arrest. If he refused to come forward the Government forces could shoot him. The regulations were extremely wide ranging and open to various interpretations according to the predeliction of the controlling officer.Complaints of harsh enforcement in Bloemfontein led to revealing correspondence between General Smuts and the controlling officer there. Smuts questioned him about 3 regulations promulgated in Bloemfontein (323): the first of these stated that no striker could leave his home without special permission. The controlling officer justified this in terms of regulation 15 which allowed him to regulate the movements of any person. The second forbad the display of red flags. The controlling officer justified this in terms of Regulation 21 G which prohibited acts liable to prejudice good order. The third made it an offence to assist any striker, directly or indirectly, in the form of food, money etc. Smuts replied to these justifications agreeing to any promulgation the controlling officer made as long as it did not conflict with those published in the Government Gazette. He instructed the controlling officer to withdraw the second and third regualtions when he judged they were no longer necessary. These regulations were enforced where possible. For example, arrests were made of strikers found in the streets of Bloemfontein (324).

The authorities also endeavoured to break the strike by preventing communication between workers, by arresting leaders, and by isolating areas where the strike was strong.. Under the regulations public meetings were prohibited and generally congregations of strikers attempting to meet together were dispersed (325). Some meetings were prohibited and the authorities used the opportunity to obtain the names of leaders from police spies sent to the meetings (326). The controlling officers were responsible for censoring all communications and newspapers. The editor of the Transvaal Chronicle was reprimanded for articles in his paper and warned that he must submit all copy to the control officer. On the eighteenth the plant of the 'Strike Herald' was seized. In order to isolate Pretoria, where the strike war most strongly supported, and prevent communication between strike leaders the staff officer in Pretoria instructed the editor of the 'Pretoria News' to insert in his paper of the fourteenth the following notice:- "It is notified for general information that the Pretoria - Johannesburg roads are closed to travellers not in possessions of a permit".

Cables, which had been sent from England, for the information of the South African public on protest meetings in England condemning the S.A. Government's actions, were suppressed. In a letter of thanks to the Government censor for his diligence General Smuts wrote:-

> "were those messages now published apart from effect they would have on the strikers and labour sumpathizers ... their effect on English and Dutch speaking citizens now supporting the Government might have incalculable consequences seeing that they would be regarded by the majority of people not well informed as representing general view of public in United Kingdom". (327).

323 DC 172 7232 General Smuts to Controlling Officer
324 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 24.1.14
325 DC 168 1/7164 Report of Control Officer
326 ibid
327 DC 169 7/1/64

The Government, through its regulations censorship and the armed forces repressed any murmur of dissension. Any possible focus for organization of strikers or mobilization of support was made impotent. Public meetings were prohibited, trade union and labour party leaders arrested, trade union offices ransacked and all their documents removed. (328). For the same reasons the rights of local authorities were curtailed. For example, the Pretoria Town Council had to specially request the permission of the controlling officer to call a special meeting for the twentieth of the Town Council to discuss the industrial crisis. The controlling officer gave permission providing that nothing was said which might promote "dissaffection or ill-feeling" and that no discussion must take place in relation to the Governments action in the strike. No members of the public were allowed to attend and the only report permittted for press publication was to be an official communiqué drawn up by the control officer. (329).

As one would expect with the incompetence of leaders and the weakness of trade union organisation on the one hand the autocratic methods of the Government on the other, the strike was a total failure.

9.5 1914 Strike - The Worker's Response

Railway workers had every reason not to respond to a call for a strike no matter what the circumstances. They were governed by the Railways and Harbours Service Act of 1912, which prohibited striking with penalties of up to £50 and/or six months with or without hard labour. More importantly the strikers forfeited pension rights, lost all their contributions to the sick fund and lost holiday rights. For those workers housed by the Administration they risked ejection from their homes.

Apart from this, on the sixteenth the Chief Mechanical Engineer at Salt River informed the strike committee that no active participant in the strike would be allowed to return to work (330). On the same day the Manager warned strikers not to use "opprobrious epithets" to non-strikers or they would be dismissed immediately (331). The workers must have been aware that a blacklist was being drawn up. This was done on the instructions of General Smuts on the thirteenth when he wired control officers:-

> "Government desire police to be very careful to take names and full particulars of individual railway employees who have been in any way ringleaders or threatened violence or been conspicuous in pulling out other employees" (332).

The railway workers were aware that the compiling of a black list was not an empty threat. One of their grievances was the discrimination practised against people who had been black listed for trade union activities in the past. In December 1914 the General Secretary of the ASRHS petitioned Prime Minister Botha asking for the position of 500 men who had been blacklisted and dismissed to be reconsidered (333). As late as 1926 the railway unions complained about the continuance of victimisation of men active in the 1914 Strike (334).

The strict censorship of the press makes it difficult to assess the number of workers who struck not to mention the feelings of the rest of the workers. The newspapers generally used figures from the report of the General Manager of the railways. As a rejoinder to the Administrations claim that the strike was poorly supported the Transvaal Federation published their own bulletins until their press was seized (335). Just as the capitalist press distorted in their own interests so did the trade union press in an attempt to rally support and prevent demoralisation. The records include a few magistrate's reports which are probably

328 'Justice' 193 3/82/14
329 DC 1154 5422
330 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 24.1.14
331 ibid
332 SAMR 1084 215/4/3
333 PM 1/1/34
334 Private Secretary to Colonel Creswell Secretary AEU to F H.P Creswell 24.2.26
335 In the Johannesburg Africana Library

reliable (336). The reports of the controlling officers do not give very full information on the numbers of workers who struck or which sections struck. They are a useful source for assessing the workers' feelings although they have to be treated with a certain circumspection because the officers have an interest in exaggerating the possible support for the strike and the importance of the effects of their actions. In his notes on the Railways and Harbours Strike and Service Amendment Act the law adviser wrote that the strike was well supported in the railway workshop in Pretoria and Johannesburg and later spread to the workshops of Natal, OFS and the Cape but that generally the running staff remained at work (337). It seems to have been the case, as one might anticipate, that the strike was most fully supported by railway workshop employees. These were well organised, most of them belonging to the craft unions. They were skilled and therefore not easily replaceable and therefore felt more secure in striking.

The strike seems to have been most fully supported in Pretoria and Bloemfontein. In Pretoria there were nearly 1 000 white workers employed in the railway workshops, the large majority struck on the eighth. Some running staff also struck work. (338). On the eleventh the building workers of Pretoria voted to strike. In retaliation the National Federation of Building Trade Employers resolved that in future they would only negotiate with trade unions which consisted solely of building trade workers (339). On the sixteenth the troops completely cordoned off the railway premises in Pretoria to prevent strikers contacting workers (340). On the nineteenth the white workers in the municipal workshop (Pta) struck in sympathy with railway workers (341). Despite reports of a return to work in other centres most Pretoria strikers did not return until the Minister gave notice on the twenty-second that all employees must return by the twenty third or they would be considered as having retired (342).

The strike was at first well supported by the railwaymen in Bloemfontein. All the workshop staff, 300 men, struck on the eighth and tried to persuade the running staff to join. On the eleventh when they read a message from the general manager that the men in other centres wanted to return to work they treated the claim with contempt and tore up all the messages (343). On the twelfth the strikers gained control of the station and stopped trains going through. The authorities regained control and operated a reduced service (344). On the fifteenth a demonstration of strikers who wanted to hold a meeting to enrol rupport was dispersed when the control officer threatened to use force if they refused (345). Some workers returned and by the fifteenth there was a full service operating through Bloemfontein (346). By the seventeenth all the strikers had returned except 36 whose names were posted up as not wanted. This included all the leaders (347).

The response to the strike in other areas varied. From the eighth the strikers controlled waterval Boven and cut all the telegraph wires. Troops arrived on the 13th and trains began operating from here on the 14th (348).

336 'Justice' 191
337 PM 1/1/19
338 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 17.1.14
339 ibid Most building workers belonged to craft unions which included workers in other industries
340 ibid 24.1.14
341 ibid
342 ibid
343 ibid
344 DC 164 Report of Control officer
345 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 17.1.14
346 DC 168 1/7164 Report on situation
347 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 24.1.14
348 SAMR 1084 215/4/3

On the 10th all the railwaymen at Breyton railway centre, Ermelo and Zeerust and some of the railwaymen at Pieterburg struck work (349). As far as the Cape was concerned the greatest support was from the railway workshop employees. According to the General Managers' report even so only 310 out of 1420 workers struck (350). By the sixteenth all the workers at the Cape had returned except for 43 men at the Salt River works whom the management did not went back (351). There was no strike in Port Elizabeth. The authorities permitted one meeting there on the 14th at which local members of parliament and members of the Provincial Council spoke. They acknowledged the workers' grievances but condemned the strike (352). Over 400 railway workers and some building workers struck in Durban. The building workers did not return until the 25th of January - the last to return (353).

The General Strike call by the Federation was only supported by a few unions. 9059 workers struck on 54 gold mines, 43 957 shifts were lost (354). The gold mines were fully protected by troops to prevent reoccurances of the 1913 events. In 1913 55 gold mines had been affected. 19 000 workers were affected and 69 665 shifts were lost (355). The 1914 figures indicate a considerable amount of support considering the difficulties involved in striking. By the 15th of January all the gold mines on the Reef were operating. Over 400 workers struck at Premier Mine, 70 remaining at work. They were all dismissed and replacments found (356). All the white workers at the Cornelia Mine at Viljoens Drift struck on the fifteenth. In Johannesburg the Typographical Union also struck in sympathy which prevented the publication of several newspapers. The 'Transvaal Leader' immediately declared itself a non-union shop (357). Neither SATU workers nor the workers at Premier Mine were affiliated to the Federation yet they responded to the strike call.

Without leadership, unable to communicate and unable to use strike tactics like picketting and mass meetings to maintain a sense of purpose and solidarity it is surprising that the strike continued as long as it did. It indicates a large degree of militancy and sense of grievance. As soon as leaders were arrested the focus of demands was shifted on to a demand for their release. The strike committee attempted to rally the workers on this point. In spite of the fact that the press and the government called the strike leaders "dangerous syndicalists" no attempt was made in their propoganda to suggest using anything other than constitutional means. They did not urge the workers to use force or sabotage but, rather, thry urged passive resistance. A leaflet issued by the Federation on the fifteenth and signed by the SALP leader F.H.P. Creswell said:-

> "The Government declared Martial Law, imprisoned leaders, they are trying to terrorise you back to work
> Do not be terrorised into working
> Do not be provoked into violence
> Keep cool stick together and sit tight (358)

349 'Justice' 191 Magistrate Volksrust. DC 168 1/7164 Report on situation
350 DC 168 1/7164 Cape Manager SAR report
351 DC 169 8/7164 Control Officer report
352 ibid
353 ibid
354 TCM AR 1914
355 ibid. also Disturbances Commission
356 Diamond Fields Advertiser 31.1.14
357 ibid 17.1.14
358 Leaflets in Africana Library Johannesburg

The ideology of the Federation is clearly expressed in another propoganda leaflet. It is not exactly syndicalist.

> "Whether South Africa is to be a free country, or a country of forced labour terrorised by Government rifles at the dictation of a slave driving oligarchy; a country in which industrial or political opponents are to be crushed by Martial Law ... You, by keeping up the struggle are the truest patriots. You, by keeping solid, are the real nation builders. Yours is a war, not against the community but for it. You are battling for genuine FREE LABOUR, not for scab protection, but for conditions that will make this country attractive to all the world, a land of the free, a land that men can love as their home. It is Liberty itself that is at stake" (359).

Even expressed in such militant style these sentiments are clearly compatible with 'liberal capitalism'

The reports of the controlling officers give an insight into the effect the Government's measures had on the strikers. According to the Controlling Officer for the Pietermaritzburg area;

> "The proclamation of Martial Law had a wonderful effect on strikers, who imagined we would adopt most drastic measures there under ... Any sign of picketting was at once arrested ... In Durban picketting was attempted but proved a failure owing to the constant patrolling carried out by troops, and my distinct orders that any interference with workers would not be tolerated" (360).

The report of the control officer for the Cape Western district is worth quoting in full. At the beginning he details the sending of troops to Salt River works, the railway station and the docks;

> "In my opinion this sudden display of force had a great moral effect upon the situation in Cape Town and uncoubtedly prevented a large proportion of men from striking who would otherwise have done so, whilst it doomed the strike to certain failure from the outset; furthermore it actually weakened the ranks of the strikes as about 195 men called up for duty with the Defence Force were drawn from the Salt River works and included some hot-headed young mechanics who were in sympathy with the strike. I was criticised a good deal at the time for making this move, but I am perfectly satisfied... that this display of force contributed more than anything else to the complete and speedy victory of the forces of law and order. Railway officials who previously were anything but loyal suddenly found themselves filled with a determination to stand by Government at all costs ..... but it is difficult to go forward when a bayonet is firmly pressed against ore's breast, and it is equally difficult for labour agitators to organise a succesful strike when the certainty of its failure is dominant in the minds of the would-be strikers. I have not the least doubt that had this strong measure not been taken a very much larger number of railway and other trade unionists in Cape Town would have struck work and the strike would have been of much longer duration, the strong force at my disposal made it possible for me to guarantee that no intimidation, direct or indirect would be allowed and that workmen who desired to pursue their calling would be given the utmost protection possible. The failure of the strike in Cape Town had also a very considerable moral effect upon the railway service elsewhere in the Union" (361).

The other control officers give little information on the course of the strike and concentrate on details of mobilization, arrest of leaders and the mobilization of "leading citizens" as special constables.

359 This leaflet was signed by Geo Kendall organiser of the ASE and Chairman of the Acting Executive of the Federation.
360 DC 169 8/7164
361 ibid

SECTION 10

Reasons for the Government's Actions in 1914 Strike

According to their own rationalisation the action taken by the Government was necessary because the South African state was threatened by a "syndicalist conspriacy" (362). The strong measures taken were necessary because of the threat to established law and order.From this view point the workers were protected from intimidation by dangerous syndicalists. To ensure the future safety of the workers on the 26 of January these "syndicalists" were removed from jail and deported to England (363).

10.1 The Syndicalist Conspiracy

Syndicalism was a doctrine of the left of the labour movement in Europe and America - more voluble and talked about than widespread or effective. Like communism, its aim was to transfer the control of the means of production to the working class the trade unions were to be the means of mobilization of the working class and the basis of the social and political structure of the future socialist state. The synditalists differed from the right and left wings of the labour movement in their abstention from political involvement. The fight against the bourgeois state was to be confined to the industrial arena where they advocated go-slows, industrial subotage and strikes to rally their forces and wear away the enemy, the utimate battle for control being the general strike. Communist ideology was certainly important amongst the working class of the advanced capitalist world though it is difficult to determine the role of specifically syndicalist ideology. Smuts, and most others of his class, did not discriminate between working class ideologies. Any movement against the existing state or advocating a general strike was called syndicalist.

In his evidence to Parliament on the syndicalist nature of the strike Smuts' 'proof' largely consisted of quotes from the speeches of the leaders. The speeches were collected from police and newspaper reports of trade union meetings from the beginning of the 1913 strike. In their speeches the leaders were indoubtedly militant. For example:-

A.Crawford speaking to the workers at Benoni - 26-5-13 -
"Now Mr Waterston has just told you that the engine drivers are coming out tonight. Perhaps they will leave their engines well oiled. I said 'perhaps'. If I was an engine driver I would oil the engines with sand. And if I understood anything about electrical work I would create difficult short circuits ... Militant workers must recognise that these things cannot be done by peaceful methods ... you must act deeds, not words and according to the new strike philosophy every man must be a law unto himself" 364).

G. Mason speaking to the workers 1.7.13
"No scab had a right to live as long as there was a rope long enough to hang him or a pool of water deep enough to drown him". (365).

362 As in Smuts speech to Parliament on the Indemnity Bills after the strike
363 DC 168 6/7164 Report of Deputy Commissioner SAP. Nine trade unionists were deported - J.T. Bain, H.J. Poutsma, A. Watson, G.W. Mason R. Waterston W.H. Morgan, D. McKerrall, A. Crawford, W. Livingston.
364 'Justice' 165 SAP Report
365 R.D.M. 2.7.13

After a general strike had been called, the 'Worker', the organ of the Labour Party in an article on the third of July wrote:-

> "War has been declared ... We can still be constitutional, that is, avoid common crime like murder or arson: but now it is war, the shoe has got to be made to pinch everywhere as tight as it will go, until they cry for mercy and really, once it is war, the things usually called murder, arson destruction of property and so on, become the principle occupation of armies, and there is no reason in principle,but only in tactics, why they should not be included in the various forms of acute pressure which have to be exercised in "industrial war" (366).

From the police compilation of speeches Crawford, Mason, Bain, J.F. Brown, Waterston, G. Kendall, Carbis, McKerrall, and J. Clarke were all liable to be charged with at least one of the following: inciting to violence, inciting workers to strike, attempting to reduce the police from other duty, inciting black workers to break their contracts (367). After the 1913 strike these leaders held propoganda meetings at which they often spoke of the need to arm in the face of the threat from the state, though sometimes some of them, particularly Crawford, concentrated on the need to organise strong trade unions (368).

During the 1913 strike the Federation assumed some of the functions of government. In Benoni passes were issued to those who supported the strike which was necessary to ensure immunity from attack. The Federation also attempted determine which municipal service they would allow to operate. They called on various municipal employees to strike but 'permitted' some essential service employee to remain at work. (369).

In August 1913 a deputation from the Federation interviewed the Secretary for Mines who discussed impending industrial legislation with them (379). They told him that they were not interested in a trade union act because trade unions have forced all the recognition they want. They went on to say that the Government imposes its will by force and the Federation as the Government of Labour would also impose its will by using the forces at its disposal if its demands were not granted. The Federation representatives claimed they could call on the white workers whenever they wanted.

All this evidence in an indication that militant trade unionists were becoming prominent. This is what one would expect in a situation where trade unions are not given recognition by government or employers. There is no evidence of plans to take over control of the state. Some of these trade unionists supported the labour party and hoped for realisation of some of their demands by constitutional political means. Others hoped to realise their demands by putting pressure on the state and employers by the use of the strike weapon. One must distinguish between the words and deeds of the trade union leaders. Although towards the end of the year in their speeches some leaders, notably Livingston and Mason, advised workers to arm themselves, when the Trades Hall was evacuated no weapons were found (371). In January 1914 when the Defence Forces were called up the Strike Committee issued the following notice:-

> "The Committee grants permission to all members of the union defence Force who may be called upon to do so to report themselves as desired by the authorities. The committee recommend that no member should decline to report if requested" (372)

366 'The Worker' 3.7.13 Annexures and Evidence of Town Clerk
367 'Justice' 192 3/35/14
368 ibid
369 Disturbances Commission Amixuren and Evidence of Town Clerk Q 5667
370 'Justice' 178 3/1418/13 Secretary Mines to Minister Mines 27.8.13
371 'Justice' 193 3/84/14 DC 168 1/7164
372 Quoted in 'Militana' 1/3 1969 p. 71

During the strike the papers of the ASRHS Pretoria and trade union papers at the Trades Hall Johannesburg were seized. A government official was appointed to sort through these papers and report on the strike plans of the trade unions. He found nothing of a seditious nature (373). He has also requested to find evidence for Smuts to use in his speech on the Indemnity Bill of plans by the leaders to form a provisional Government.The only document remotely connected with taking on government functions concerned a suggestion at a meeting to from a Provisional Council for Public Safety in case of danger from blacks (374).

Part of the aim of the government was to isloate the "extremists" from moderate elements in the labour movement. Accordingly the Minister of Defence objects when the control officer informed him of the arrest two labour party leaders. Dreswell and Boydell, for conspiracy to defeat the ends of justice and wanted to know what offence they had committee because the governments policy is to allow

> "considerable latitude to the utterances and attitudes of labour members of parliament and so long as they use the usual claptrap of the party and do not advocate syndicalist methods the government does not wish to exercise its powers of arrest" (375).

However, as the defence of the deported leads by Creswell is Parliament and the mass protest meetings shows the"moderates"did not set up such an absolute division between themselves and the so-called syndicalists (376). When Creswell and Boydell arrived in Capetown,after being released from prison, they were met by an enthusiastic crowd of about 5 000. In their speeches to the crowd the labour leaders condemned the government's actions in the strike and the deportations (377).

Although they advocated militant tactics there is no evidence that any of the 'syndicalists' had any part in the dynamiting and sabotage of the railways. The controlling officers draw up a list of 39 such cases during the strike period, an index of the fairly easy availability of explosive and the frustration of the workers to whom more usual strike methods were closed (378).

The strike was ineptly organised, the strike leaders depending on spontaneous enthusiasm due to the militancy of some sections of workers rather than labourious perparation and hard work. There is no evidence of any plan to usurp government authority. This does not mean that Smuts and his like were completely insincere in there talk of a syndicalist conspiracy. They feared and detested socialists and saw them as alien,describing them as "foreign agitators". (379). In fact, all the men deported in 1914 were foreign born - 5 were Scottish, 2 English, one Australian and one dutch.

Smuts wanted vengence for the humiliating experience of his agreement with the "foreign agitators" July 1913. In his own words;

> "I admit freely that it was one of the hardest things I have done in my life to put my name on a document together with that of Mr Bain and the others" (380).

I believe a genuine fear of syndicalism and a desire to redress humiliation played a part is determining the action taken by the Government in 1914. I have also suggested various reasons in the section on the Defence Force. I explore other factors below including the overriding consideration - the black population.

373 'Justice' 193 3/82/14 Deputy Commissioner SAP to Secretary Justice 11.1.14
374 'Justice' 193 3/18/14
375 'Justice' 191 Smuts to control 16.1.14
376 Creswell op. cit. The debate on the Indemnity Bill was the longest ever in Parliament up to that date due to the
377 'Diamond Fields Advertiser' 31-1-14
378 DC 168 7/7169
379 e.g. Speech by John X Meriman, Stellenbosch, 'The Strike and its Lessons' published Cape Times 5.8.13
380 Quoted in 'Die Randse Staking van 1914 J. Ploeger p. 64 'Militaria' 1/3 1969

10.2 Black Peril

"The native question is the most serious one for South Africa, and in regard to the industrial unrest it is the greatest problem that we have to face"(381)

The extent of the mobilisation and the forcefulness of the actions was a precautionary measure in case of black unrest and also intended as an object lesson to the blacks.

During the 1913 strike white miners and some leaders had attempted to induce blacks to strike - either through persuasion or intimidation. Pickets at the New Kleinfontein had tried as early as the eleventh of June to get blacks to strike for more pay (382). In his evidence the General Superintendent of the Native Recruiting Corporation H.M. Baberer claimed that blacks who struck on the fourteenth of June told him they were afraid to go down because of threats by white workers to blow them up under ground. (383). He claimed that;

"at one time it was difficult to know whether the natives would not go on to the side of the strikers"(384). On the twenty third of June, four days after the white workers, the black workers on the Van Ryn struck work. On the third of July 600 blacks at Driefontein and many at the New Comet struck work. There were disturbances and rioting at Wolhuter, City Deep and Crown Mines until the 9th July. On the eighth of July a total of nine thousand blacks struck at the City and Suburban,Meyer and Charlton, Village Main Reef and Village Deep. On the ninth of July the black workers at Modderfontein B refused to work. In all these cases workers were forced back to work at the point of b yonet (385). According to the Native Grievances Enquiry a serious crisis was narrowly averted. If the blacks had come out when police and troops were occupied with white rioters there was a risk of a serious outbreak possibly spreading all along the Reef (386).

The authorities believed that these strikes were partly to be explained by the actions of white workers threatening the blacks but they also believed blacks were imitiating white worker methods in the hope of gaining increased wages and other concessions themselves.

"During the strike the natives had not only been interested spectators of the methods employed by the European strikers but some had actually followed their lead in fomenting dissatisfaction urging natives to strike and picketting and threating those who did not comply with the demands" (387).

Apart from the fear of the effect on blacks consciousness of the sight of whites striking and whites fighting one another there was another concrete fear;

"All of them (black mineworkers) want more pay and most of them are under the impression that the employment of force by European miners during the riots of last July resulted in the latter obtaining their demands"(388)

The viability of the gold mining industry,the basis of the economy, depended on cheap labour as already explained in the introduction. The gold mines could not continue operation if forced to concede wage increases to the mass of the workers (389)

The government feared that the effect on blacks of seeing inter-white disputes would be to lessen their respect for white authority. They wanted to control blacks

381 Merriman op. cit.
382 Disturbances Commission Evidence of Assistant Magistrate Boksburg and Resident Magistrate Boksburg Q849-63 Q 81028
383 ibid. TabererQ6833-6853
384 ibid Q6853
385 NA 208 210/14 F473
386 Native Grievances Commission UG 37'14 parag. 482
387 NA 208 210/14 F473
388 Native Grievances UG 37'14 parag. 474
389 see Johnstone R. 'Class Race, and Gold'

by mean of black respect for white superiority, "moral persuasion" rather than "fixed bayonets". (390). The reason given by the magistrate reporting on the Premier Mine riots for the violence then shown towards whites was the fact that their authority had been undermined (According to the inspector reporting on the Jagfontein Riot of the (391) ninth of January the animosity towards Whites in authority was due to;

> "the far reaching spirit of unsettlement in the relations between labour and authority which was predominant at that time. There can be no doubt that doctrines as to the supremacy of labour and the power of numbers have invaded the native compounds and for the present it is sufficient I think to regard the new development as a symptom more of class than of race antagomisms ... it is certainly not pleasant to conjure the picture of conflict precipitated by the agitations of labour when aggravated by deep-rooted antipathies of race and colour" (391A).

Part of the governments policy towards blacks was to maintain the control of "customary rulers" over them. However, the chiefs were dissatisfied because of the Land Act which restricted the areas of land to be available for blacks to purchase. The editorial in Ilanga Lase Natal of the thirteenth of June 1913 said that sending representatives to England to appeal for redress of repressive laws was useless and that all the chiefs should band together and order all the people to strike which would be a more effective weapon than attempting a rising (392).

On the 1st of January 1914, following the strikes of Indian workers 300 black workers at the Natal Navigation Colliories struck work for increased pay. They returned to work on the 3rd. On the second 700 blacks at Glenco Colliories Natal struck work demanding increased pay. They returned on the fifth (393).

At this time of general labour unrest and the undermining of the established control mechanisms the government felt the need to asset its repressive capacity.

In an attempt to forestall unrest amongst the black gold workers during the white's strike the Prime Minister issued a notice to be read to all the mine workers. He told them that the strike was between the government and its servants and had nothing to do with the blacks. If the strike spread to the mines the black workers will be paid anyway and there we many armed men Johannesburg to deal with anyone committing acts of violence and any disobedience will be severly dealt with. The message and the force available was effective and there were no strikes by black during the white workers' strike of 1914. According to an officers report;

> "Natives are quiet and appear cowed by the presence of the burghers" (394).

The force available in 1914 was also seen as necessary in case of any breakouts of blacks from their compounds. During a successful strike by white miners blacks have no work to do. During the New Kleinfontein strike the manager arranged to keep blacks occupied reopening roads, cleaning etc. (395). In the long term it would be difficult to keep the 200 000 blacks on the Rand gold mines active.

390 'Native Grievances' parag. 480
391 NA 208 210/14 F473 Rose-Innes, to Acting Attorney General 27.12.13
392 NA 207 98/14/F473
393 SAMR 1028 305 Lieutenant Colonel SAMR to DSO.
394 SAMR 1084 215/14/3
395 MNW 240 mm 10505/14 New Kleinfontein Co. Ltd. to Chairman, Board of Director 27.1.14.
391A NA 208 220/14/F473 inspector OFS Labour District to Director Native Labour 21-3-14

Horrific possibilities were imangined especially if there was a shortage of food as well. In regard to the 1913 strike the Governor General wrote:-

"Had authority not been maintained no hold on mine boys could have been retained. Reduced to idleness, massed in compounds and brought to starvation by railway stoppages, only too probable with electric cables cut, they would have broken box and the horror of the situation can hardly be exaggerated. Then every kraal in South Africa would have heard of the white man's impotence". (396)

In a similar vein the organiser of the citizens "defence force" in 1913 J. Fitzpatrick said;

> "Those of us who know anything of the uncivilised native out of control, know that if the attempt to turn loose 200 000 savages on a town without light and water were allowed to succeed this place would have been such a hell upon earth as no-one has ever seen" (397).

The government were also aware of the disruptive effects a strike has on recruiting. As already stated, during the 1913 strike the Government prohibited recruiting. During the 1914 strike they warned companies that they would cancel the blacks contracts and repatriate them at the companies' expense if they did not pay the workers during the period of the strike (398). In August 1913 the Government relaxed the prohibition on the recruiting of blacks but the recruiting organisation complained that recruiting was very slow, few blacks volunteering because they feared that the white workers would strike again (399).

After the riots on the Jagersfontein the magistrate suggested the formation of a volunteer corps by white employees in case of reoccurances. The undersecretary for Defence warned that this was contrary to the provisions of the Defence Act 1912 but it was possible for white employers to form "Defence Rifle Association and thus obtain rifles, alternatively they could be sworn in as special constables under the Police Act and form a regular crops - uniformed, discipline and drilling (400). Similarly the magistrate for Ladysmith applied to have white employees at Elandslaagte sworn in as special constables, the same as the white employees at Ballengleich in case of further Indian strikes (401).

This role for white workers vis à vis the black was much more satisfactory to the white polity which felt threatened by any dissension within the ranks of the 'superior race'. In Smuts' words;

> "This is not a country where we can allow a state of anarchy to prevail. We are a small colony in a Dark continent. Whatever divisions creep in among the whites are sure to be reflected in the conduct of the native population, and if ever there was a country where the white population must ever be watchful and careful and highly organised and ready to put down with an iron hand all attempts such as were made on the present occasion, that country is South Africa. The Government felt that and has acted accordingly" (402).

396 Correspondence relating to disturbance on the Rand
397 Disturbances Commission. Evidence of J. Fitzpatrick
398 NA 207 98/14/F473 secretary NA to Native Affairs Dept. Johannesburg 8.1.14
399 'Justice' 178 3/1418/13 Secretary Mines to Minister 18.9.13
400 'Justice' 266 5/26/14 Under Secretary Defence to Secretary Justice 18.2.14
401 'Justice' 184 4/744/13 24.12.13
402 Quoted in 'Militaria'v 1/3 1969 p. 85