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Lodge, Tom

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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by: Tom Lodge

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THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS IN THE RAND TOWNSHIPS, 1955-1957.

TOM LODGE

This paper will examine three instances of African protest: the attempts to resist the removals in the Johannesburg western areas, the opposition to Bantu Education and the Alexandra bus boycott of 1957. It was hoped that analyses of these movements would throw some light on the relationship of organised nationalist opposition to the less formal resistance that sprung from economic pressures rather than clearly percieved political aspirations. To have examined in detail protest in which the ANC was not obviously involved might have provided a more useful focus but unfortunately information on the kind of 'informal' protest described below is difficult to obtain from the more obvious sources which for reasons of time the research for this paper had to be limited. However an examination of the three campaigns does provide some insight into the relationship between the ANC and local interests and the extent to which it succeeded in channelling and expressing popular grievances. This may help to correct distortions which have resulted from a tendancy to analyse African political opposition purely from the perspective of the nationalist movement, considering it in isolation from the general socio-economic context of black politics. The history of the ANC in the 1950s needs to be written from a local level: how did branches operate, how were they viewed in the local community, what particular interests did they represent, was there anything socially distinct about their membership, howwere the local communities structured?

Some of the hesitation to look critically at the social basis of black politics has been the result of much of the writing about the opposition of this period being the work of people who were closely involved in the Congress movement. Congress ideology at the time stressed the virtually undifferentiated nature of the African population. In 1955, the editor of a pro-Congress newspaper, New Age, wrote:

> South Africa is singular in the respect that, unlike India, Indonesia or China, she has no native bourgeoisie of any significance... Our movement does not consist of a bloc of three classes. The proletariat constitutes the preponderant majority in our national struggle... The oppressed have no tradition of private ownership under capitalism... the proletariat will emerge at the head of the national movement and proceed to solve the contradictions of capitalism by proletarian methods of class struggle.(1)

Similarly:

> When the middle class grows very slowly or even declines, the number of urban workers grows very rapidly because of a rise of industry. We may therefore expect to find that the national movement acquires a definite working class character.(2)

A willingness to work on unproven assumptions has also influenced less partisan writing. Edward Feit in his study of the ANC during the mid-1950s relates what he sees as the poor response to ANC calls for militancy to the post-war growth in the South African economy. He maintains that the economy kept ahead of the 'revolution of rising expectations', that, at best black opposition was sporadic and limited by reluctence to risk losing the chances of economic gain.(3)

The two sets of generalisation are inadequate. As will be shown, both in the Western Areas removals and the Alexandra bus boycott the social setting was complex and different interest groups played different roles during these events. Secondly, if one looks beyond those protest movement that the Congress ideologues and their academic critics regard as

politically significant(4) a more continuous and widespread resistance can be detected, one which casts some doubt on Feit's assertion that 'order is the normal state of things and disorder is very difficult to sustain' (5). A few examples of this 'informal' resistance serve to illustrate the point. In I954 the Johannesburg city council announced that rents were to go up in the south-western townships of Moroka, Orlando and Jabavu. A rent boycott forced the council to drop the proposal. ANC members were involved but the principal spokesmen for the tenants were not congressites: for the next few years they were to dominate Orlando advisory board politics as the Asinamali party having been elected on the strength of their leadership during the boycott. A similar boycott took place in Jabavu in I956 (6). The Alexandra bus boycott was the most publicised of the I950s bus boycotts (partly because Africans had to walk a long distance through white residential areas and therefore excited much concern and some sympathy). But it was not the only bus boycott of the decade nor evan the longest. The ten month Evaton boycott of I955-56, the Brakpan boycott of I956, the Sophiatown boycott of I955 and one at Katlegong near Natalspruit, were, with the exception of the last(7), similar reactions to attempts to raise fares. A rather different sort of protest was the womens riots in Vlakfontein in December I956. Vlakfontein was a model township and the Pretoria city council felt that the e istence of fowl runs threatened healph standards and so the police were sent in to destroy them. The women reacted by rioting and attacking the police(8). Two other riots of the same period show how a relatively minor material complaint could provide the initial spark for a violent confrontation. In April I956 Germiston hostel dwellers burnt down the building and in the subsequent conflict with the police four men were killed. The initial anger was caused by what was felt to be a deterioration in the food (9). A comparable outburst occurred a year later in central Johannesburg when customers at a beer-hall rioted as a response to a change in the quality of the brew (I0).

It is significant that most of these incidents arose from economic grievances. They do not suggest that economic growth was providing a standard of living that kept ahead of any revolution of rising expectati A survey of African poverty conducted by the Institute of Race Relations found 87% of African families in Johannesburg earned below what was considered neccessary for the minimum essential expenditure(II). It is in this general context of widespread urban poverty and tension that political protest should be considered.

The plan to remove the African inhabitants of the Western townships to a new location in Meadowlands (next to Orlando) was first announced by the secretary for native affairs at the Advisory Boards Congress in January I954. The Congress discussed the proposal and it was only because of the presence of ANC members among the delegates that it was decided to oppose the removals (I2). The first removals were scheduled for February I2 I955. In the week beforehand sixty Sophiatown families were told to move, being offered the choice of houses in Meadowlands or a site in Diepkloof. The families were all former tenants of an Indi landlord who had sold his property to the government (I3). Opposition to the move was discussed by three seperate organisations: the standhold Anti-Expropriation and Proper Housing Committee led by Dr A B Xuma, a former president of the ANC, the Ratepayers Association and the regional organisation as well as the local branch of the ANC. The standholders were secretive about their plans forresisting the move: at the Anti-Expropriation Committee's public meeting of January 22nd people who wanted to discuss the committee's ideas were assured that plans had beer made but for reasons of security they could not be disclosed(I4). Congress leaders were more explicit: at an open air meeting in

Sophiatown on January 9th the crowd was told by 'volunteer-in-chief' Robert Resha, a Sophiatown resident and a member of the ANC national executive, that on the day of the removals:

> You will say that you will not move, and by saying that you mean you will sit down, you will not move' (I5)

It was a strategy that was endorsed by P Q Vundla, Western Areas ANC chairman, who promised that those who were brought to court would have their legal defence paid for by Congress (I6) ANC leaders would be on the spot on the I2th to lead the resist nce (I7)

The ANC's appeal seems to have been intended to mobilise young people in Sophiatown. Robert Resha was rather a different figure from the local established ANC leadership. During the war he had worked in the mines and after being dismissed for political agitation wrote articles for newspapers. He was a leading figure in the Transvaal Youth League and was imprisoned during the I952 -53 defiance campaign. Resha had built up a group of young 'Freedom Volunteers' of which he claimed there were 500 in Sophiatown. The volunteers were to mobilise, lead and discipline the resistance; they were on no account 'to allow themselves to be provoked into violent action' (I8). In Resha's speeches there was a strong theme of moral rehabilitation: youth was

> ...to stop playing dice, abusing women and going to the bioscope for the next twelve days. The police know they are helpless to stop crime here in Sophiatown ...You must show that the removal is uppermost in your minds ...boycott pleasure.. (I9)

He went on to call for daily training meetings for the young men and prayer meetings for the women.

The Freedom volunteers appeared on the streets for the first time on the evening of February 7th. The World sourly reported that 'many of the volunteers were the sons and relatives of property owners'. During the week that followed there was apparently a considerable struggle between Congress organisers and the young men who came into Sophiatown from other parts of the reef demanding violent action against the removals (20). Not all the violently disposed people were from outside: Drum reported that a section of Sophiatown's ANC Youth League were flirting with the 'Berliners', the leading Sophiatown gangster group. The Berliners were said to be trying to intimidate Congress into using violence (2I).

But when the first removals actually took place their was neither violent nor peaceful opposition: two thousand police were drafted into Sophiatown to ensure that these did not take place. In fact Congress strategy, in an case, seems to have been to avoid confrontation: on the night before the first removals (which were brought forward three days) Congress volunteer went from house to house helping families who did not wish to be sent to Meadowlands to move their belongings into shelters which had been previously constructed by the volunteers behind other properties. Twenty-two families were helped in this fashion. The tactic was repeated on the night before the I9th February, the day of the second lot of removals. This time only one family was moved before forty volunteers were arrested and the attempt to forstall the authorities was abandoned. By this stage the futility of these efforts was becoming more obvious: of the families movedin the previous week by the ANC, fourteen had applied to the authorities for housing at Meadowlands. A change in strategy was needed. Resha announced obliquely:

> We have our plans but we are not going to carry them out until a a later stage when we think the time is opportune (22).

However this was the end of any attempts to organise mass resistance to the removals. The World of March 26th noted the first removals on the east side of Sophiatown. They were very quiet and unaffected residents seemed quite accustomed to the removals and took little notice. By July the minutes of a Sophiatown ANC Youth League contained the admission that 'we have accepted the removals as routine' although they also stated that young people were 'dead scared' and 'were craving to have guns' (23).

At this point the focus of the resistance shifted from the tenants to the property owners. The Sophiatown Ratepayers Association and the standholders committee held a meeting to discuss a united front, the object being to persuade all African and Indian standholders to refuse to sell their properties to the Native Resettlement Board. By the end of March 651 African standholders in Sophiatown and Martindale had signed such an undertaking. From now on the struggle was to be confined to legalistic manoevres and its objectives became increasingly limited: by 1956 standholders were no longer challenging the principle of their right to tenure but instead were trying to negotiate the fixed official values set on their property. Government strategy seems to have followed the line of least resistance: first the tenants of non-African landlords were moved, then African traders who occupied stands owned by Indians and Chinese (almost all Sophiatown trading stands were Indian or Chinese owned) (24), then in 1956 the tenants of African standholders (abc 20% of Sophiatown stands were owned by Africans) and finally in late 1957 the by then isolated African property owners. (25)

Attempts to mobilise enthusiatic resistance to the Western Areas removal scheme failed. Congress organisers and their critics saw the failure in terms of a confusion of aims. As J B Marks pointed out there were considerable flaws in the direction of the movement:

> ...a major weakness was a confusion as to the aims of the campaign. The slogan 'we will not move' laid itself open to a literal interpretation that people will physically resist removal. Yet again and again Congress leaders called for restraint and non-violence. It is clear that the slogan implied really 'You will not move voluntarily' ...The people were given the impression that some last minute instructions would be issued. Those on whom resistance depended were in doubt as to what exactly they were expected to do (26)

But was there enough unity among Sophiatown inhabitants for mass resistan ANC organisers were aware of some of the problems. J J Matlou, the branch organiser, was to appeal to tenants not to estrange themselves from landlords who were abusing their position by demanding key money and shutting off water to those who were behind with their rents. Congress would deal with such people when the struggle was over (27). But some of the freedomd Congress professed to be defending were ones which would have had little meaning to their audience. Fifty-eight thousand people were to be moved from the Western Areas. In Sophiatown there lived only 300 property owners (28). Incomes in the Western Areas were extremely low: it was estimated in 1953 that 21% of the population earned under £10 a month, 55% between £10 and £20 and 20% abov £20 (29). So when ANC speakers told their audiences 'we are defending the principle, the right to own your own site and build your own home' (3(they were speaking to people who lived crowded into shacks built on tiny plots rented out by standholders. The World (admittedly a newspaper ofte hostile to the ANC) reported Sophiatown sub-tenants as being in favour of removals because of the higher standard of housing being offered at Meadowlands (31).

The ANC's decision to oppose the removals was not merely the result of a

the result of a miscalculation but reflected the interests of local Congress leaders. P Q Vundla, the ANC's Western Area chairman who led the opposition is a good example. Vundla was a prominent local businessman and took an active part in the formation of both property owners' organisations. He also played an important role in local advisory board politics (32). J D Matlou, one of the main Sophiatown organisers was an insurence and land agent (33). A B Xuma, admittedly less active politically at this stage, but still clearly identified with the ANC, was one of the richest men in Sophiatown, owning property according to his own valuation, worth £7 I74. Chairman of the Sophiatown ANC at the time of the removals was Simon Tyeku, a coal merchant and property owner (35). During the early I950s the ANC's leadership in the Western Areas was dominated by members of the small but comparatively prosperous elite.

It was not a leadership that went uncontested. During the removals campaign, and the Bantu Education boycott that followed it, there was increasing conflict between the established branch leadership and members of the Youth League. Vundla was physically attacked by members of the Sophiatown ANC Youth League in May I955 (36). And it is significant that what resistance there was to the removals came from the Youth league and the young men who made up the 'Freedom Volunteer' group.For as wellas the property owning group there was another interest influencing ANC activities. The World's observation that many of the volunteers seemed to be sons of property owners perhaps should not be taken too seriously. For men and women who did not live with their families the removals represented a serious threat. For all tenants were subject to a screening process before being sent to Meadowlands to ensure that only family units were housed there. Single people were either sent to hostels or endorsed out of Johannesburg altogether (37). This might explain the desperation of young people as described by the Youth League minutes mentioned above as well as the efforts of 'the Berliners' to influence Congress policy towards violent confrontation. It was a fear that did provide a discernable theme in speeches by Youth League spokesmen who were less prone to viewing the issue simply as 'freedom for freehold'. Not everybody could go to Meadowland, they insisted, there were homes only for the servants of white people. For the others, the young unemployed and illegally resident, labour camps were being constructed. One speaker made a point of using the version of Afrikaans used by 'tsotsi' groups (38). In contras to the appeal made by property owners, the underlying assumption of the ırguement was that the attractive prospect of being resettled at Meadowlands was an illusion, not that it represented a dimunition of rights. The western areas removals posed for the older local ANC leadershi a dilemma: they represented a direct threat to their economic interests which were opposed to those of the community as a whole; the only way to mobilise any support for their position was to rely on a group who represented a challenge to their legitimacy.

The campaign against Bantu Education recieved its greatest degree of support in the Rand: by the end of April I955 after three weeks of boycott of the government controlled schools, 6948 children and II6 teachers were banned by the authorities from attending government schools as a result of their participation in the boycott. 2000 of these children and seventy reachers were from the Johannesburg Western Areas (39). 2I teachers were dismissed in Alexandra (40). Benoni, Roodeport, Moroka-Jabavu, Sophiatown, Germiston, Brakpan, Alexandra and Natalspruit were affected. The boycott began independently of any directive from the African National Congress leadership. The first location to boycott the government schools was in Benoni where it started on IIth April. Benoni was one of the poorest of the Rand townships (4I). A local ANC leader, Walter Ngquoyi, was also president of Iso Lomzi, a party that seems to have developed out an earlier

squatters movement. At a meeting held in February people were reported to be contributing generously to a fund that was to provide alternative facilities and teachers were said to be under pressure from the community to participate in the boycott (42). In Benoni the campaign seems to have developed out of popular antipathy to the government measures; it was not a boycott imposed on an apathetic population by a minority group. Germiston and Alexandra ANC branches began organising their boycotts one day after Benoni's began.

The decision to boycott was initiated at branch level. When Brakpan proposed a boycott a member of the Transvaal Executive was sent to tell them to wait until the province had recieved a clear directive from the National Executive. For though a decision to boycott schools had been taken at the 1954 national conference of the ANC and had been widely publicised to begin on April 1st, in March the National Executive ordered a postponement. This reflected considerable doubt among ANC leaders as to the wisdom of a boycott at all (43). There was also ambivelence over the boycott at a provincial level of the organisation: P Q Vundla of the Western Areas Regional Committee beleived that the boycott should be limited to a token demonstration; it should only be implemented to April 25th, the deadline set by the Education Department for school registration (44). Many delegates from the Transvaal province to the December 1955 national conference were found to be members of the new school boards (45).

In May the ANC national executive reconsidered its decison and a three phase campaign was announced starting with an intensive propaganda campaign, then the withdrawal of children in all areas where alternative facilities were organised and finally total withdrawal and 'non-cooperation with all activities directly or indirectly connected with the Bantu Education Act'(4). However though there was an ineffective attempt to organise a boycott in the Eastern Cape in fact the campaign did not spread from the original areas where branches had acted on their own initiative. What helped to give the campaign in those areas extra impetus was the organisation of 'cultural clubs': by November 1955 these were operating in Brakpan, Benoni, Germiston, Natalspruit, Alexandra and Moroka. But the clubs were forbidden to provide any formal education and there were complaints from some branches that they had not recieved the promised instruction sheets from the 'National Education Movement', the umbrella organisation established by Congress(47) Despite these shortcomings the clubs survived for well over a year: in October 1956 it was claimed that 1 515 children were still attending them (48).

But alongside the ANC attempts to provide an alternative for the banned schoolchildren there was emerging a parents movement in reaction to the boycott. In Brakpan, Alexandra and Western Areas parents committees opened up community schools for expelled children. The schools were financed and run by the parents themselves but they all applied for recognition to the to the Bantu Education Department. By August 1955 the Matlhomola private community school in the Western Areas had 950 pupils (almost half the children affected by bans). ANC officials had sounded out the school's secretary on the possibility of their serving on the school committee. They had been told that before they could stand for election 'they must confess to their followers that they have changed and that they support the present system' (49). In Brakpan where a school had been opened in September 1955 by the Brakpan Civic Protection Society (a parents' group) there was stiff opposition from the ANC. Nevertheless in its first week of operation it managed to attract of 230 out of a total of 1300 banned schoolchildren (50). In Alexandra the Haile Selaisse School was opened after the boycott with 1000 pupils: it too had written to the Bantu Education Department to register under the terms of the Act

In its case permission was refused, possibly because members of the 'Madzunya' ANC group (see below) were among the teachers. (5I)

Muc h more detailed knowledge of the events and conditions at a local level is needed before any firm conclusions can be made. Were the parents who were behind the formation of community schools people who originally supported the boycott and then grown disenchanted? Or were their children prevented from registering against their parents' wills? In Alexandra Congress organisers alleged that tsotsis intimidated children who were on their way to school (52). In the Western townships ANC picket were mainly young women who reportedly threatened to 'wallop' children if they stayed at school (53). In this context it is perhaps significant tha the boycott in the Western Areas affected only primary schools. However The World reported on I2 March I955 that parents meetings opposed the establishment of school committees (under the terms of the act) in Roodepoort, Moroka, Jabavu and Sophiatown. Parents apparently took an acti part in the boycotts at Natalspruit (54). The fact that the movement started at branch level and was only later taken up by the provincial and national organisation does suggest that there was initially strong local support. But this may have been due as much to the influence of branch members who were teachers as to the feelings of the local community. Twenty-one teachers in Alexandra were involved (there were twelve schools altogether employing about I50 teachers), ten teachers were dismissed in Benoni as a result of their support for the boycott and in Brakpan nineteen out of a possible forty-four teachers were involved (55). In the Western Native Township teachers were said to be sending home children who arrived at school (56). Teachers probably had a high degree of influence at branch level: the provincial executive for I955 may not have included any teachers and this may account for the way it lagged behind branch militancy (57). Delegates to the Transvaal provincial conference in Orlando in October I955 complained that the executive was failing to provide leadership, and that the executive report did not include any discussion of the education boycott. The reluctence of provincial ANC leaders to fully endorse the boycott and the ANC's failure to develop the campaign on a national level help to explain the serious decline in Transvaal branch membership that was reported at the conference. (58)

But there is evidence which suggests that ANC action at a branch level was an expression of widespread communal anxieties rather than a manifestati of the alienation of an educated minority in the branch membership. In the year that followed the boycott ANC members were elected to and were able to control the advisory boards of three of the locations most heavily affected by the education boycott: Roodeport, Natalspruit and Benoni.(59) In Brakpan, where all the schools were affected and which had the greatest proportion of teachers dismissed in March I956, there was a boycott of buses in protest against a Id raise in fares: the boycott was organised by the ANC and the local vigilance committee. The secretary of the vigilan committee was also a branch office holder of the ANC. It is also interest that the boycott, which commanded majority support in the location, was opposed by the Brakpan Civil Protection Society, the group which had established the community school in opposition to the ANC boycott.(60) The school was established with the support of the local council which provided accomodation, it charged fees which possibly only a certain group of parents would have been able to afford. It could be argued that Bantu education represented a denial of opportunity for those families who had no other resources to provide a basis of social mobility for their children: in this context the fact that the boycott began in one of the poorest locations, Benoni, might be significant.

The Alexandra bus boycott, which lasted from January 7th to April 3rd I957 illustrates the complexity of local community-based political action. The

boycott began as a result of an announcement by the Public Utility Transpc Corporation (PUTCO) that there would be a Id increase in the fares of all Johannesburg routes except for those from the South-West tonships. In response the Alexandra Peoples' Transport Committee was formed at a meetir called by the Alexandra Vigilance Committee on January 2, I956. The committee organised a mass meeting on Sunday, January 6th I956. The 2000 people who attended the meeting voted to boycott the buses until fares wer restored to the old level. The following day PUTCO buses ran virtually empty: 50 000 thousand of their normal users walked to work. Simultaneous boycotts were begun in Sophiatown and Lady Selbourne in Pretoria: both locations were also affected by the fare increases.(6I).

Though the initial meeting was called by the Vigilance Association among twenty-four people who attended were several distinct groups. They include members of the Standholders and Tenants Association, the local branch of t ANC, the ANC (Madzunya) group, the ANC National-Minded bloc, the Movement for Democracy of Content and the Workers League (62). The committee that was formed was thus a coalition of different political and economic interests. The Vigilance Association and the Standholders and Tenants Association reprented about I000 standholders and people who rebted stands from external property owners (63). A member of the Vigilance Committee, S Mahlangu was elected as APTC chairman; APTC secretary was another Vigilance Committee member, R D Sishi. The ANC representatives on the committee were Alfred Nzo, branch secretary, K H Beloo, T Nkobi and three members of the ANC Womens' League. Though none were committee office-hold ers, they represented the largest single group. Alfred Nzo was a healph inspector and T Nkobi a laborat ry assistant. The ANC (Madzunya) group was led by a former ANC branch chairman, Josias Madzunya, who opposed the formation of the multi-racial Congress Alliance and the ANC's adoption of the Freedom Charter. They were a less educated or articulate parallel group to the 'Africanist' Youth League faction in Orlando. Mad zunya had been expelled from the ANC in late I955, and with M Motsele, the former ANC branch secretary had fomed a sepe rate 'African Nationalist group.(64) Madzunya was about 48 in I957. He had come to Johannesburg in I93I and while working as a casual labourer and a domestic servant attended a Communist Party night school to the level of standard seven as well as taking a correspondence course in public speaking. In I940 he joined the ANC. He earned his living by selling cardboard boxes on a stree corner in central Jo nnesburg. His speeches had a strongly racialist flavour:(65)

> These whites are just bluffing you by saying that they are friendly to you. They will never be friendly ...Europeans are like lice. They are parasites busy sucking on blood by means of work for uneaqual pay' (66)

The ANC National-Minded Bloc was the result of an earlier split in the ANC over the issue of cooperation with the South African Indian Congress before the Defiance Campaign. The movement, which was headed by R V Selope Thema, editor of The World until I952, had very little following. Amongst its Alexandra supporters was R G Baloyi, who owned an estate agency and a b c ompany(67). It may be significant that two months before the boycott there was a campa ign by Alexandra African businessmen to oust Indian trade from the location (68). In general the ANC National Minded Bloc was a conservative group; it was traditionally opposed to boycotts of all kinds and its leadership was composed of wealphy businessmen and traders. The other groups are not well documented: Dan Mokonyane of the Movement for Democracy of Content was a law student at the University of the Witwatersrand and claimed to be interested in trade unions (69). Dan Mokonyane was elected secretary of the Peoples' Transport Committee.

But it would be misleading to view the boycott as the result of the organisation represented by the coalition of interests on the Peoples' Transport Committee. One African commentator wrote:

> Nobody really organised the Alexandra bus boycott. People started talking among themselves about the intolerable conditions .. They said among themselves that the moment of reckoning would come one day, but nobody took their murmurings seriously. One morning however, a few people refused to pay the higher fares ... and within a few days the boycott had snowballed into a movement of incredible dimensions... (70)

Matshikazi Themba wrote in Drum

> He wanted the 4d back as an immediete step, and he wanted a review of wages to follow ...murmuring of a new slogan to succeed Azikwelwa (we will not ride) 'Gein' Ukudla' (keep food for a rainy day). The existing political parties have had to break into a run to keep up with him. The man of the street is ahead of his own committee... (71)

It should be remembered that Alexandra was exceptional among Johannesburg locations in that it fell outside the administration of the municipal council and was administered by theAlexandraHealph Board, a body with very limited powers. It could do little to prevent overcrowding: standholders were allowed to build up to fifteen rooms a stand: each stand could accomodate up to 180 people. Rooms were let a a rent of between £3 and £4 a month (72). An infant mortality rate of 400 per thousand was claimed by a local doctor(73) and average wages were said to be £2 10s a week (74) A notorious crime rate was partly due to the fact that it was comparatively difficult for Alexandra residents to find jobs in the Johannesburg municipal areas which resulted in widespread unemployment (75) During the boycott decisions were taken at well attended open air meetings whe re thousands of people voted, not by small committees. Speeches at the meetings reflected the general desperation:

> When we are tired we shall rest.. They are punishing us because we are poor .. save food and prepare for the offensive. (76)

But the detailed breakdown of the composition of the APTC is helpful becaus during the following three months divisions within the committee emerged. these were prompted by initiatives taken by the Johannesburg employers and PUTCO itself. At first within the employers there were also differences. The Chamber of Commerce appealed to firms to actively discourage boycotters whereas industrialists arranged for lorries to collect their employees from Alexandra(77). However by the beginning of February the Chamber of Commerce was urging that employers should pay an extra shilling a week transport allowance: an offer that most of their members endorsed but which was rejected by the boycott committee(78). Cracks in the unity of the boycott committee began to appear when PUTCO threatened on the 16th of February to withdraw all bus services permenantly if the boycott was not called off by March Ist. Though a meeting held in Alexandra on the evening of the 20th voted for the boycott to go on the PUTCO threat succeeded in alarming some members of the boycott committee. On Sunday 35th there was a secret meeting between six of the original leaders headed by S Mahlangu and PUTCO representatives. This group was to urge other organisers not to make any drastic decision but it was advice that went unheeded: a meeting of 5000 thousand voted to continue the boycott (79). The World provides an indication to the identity of this more conciliatory group when it reported half way through March that two property owners' organisations and a political party was involved in seeking a solution (80).

The political party seems likely to have been the ANC National Minded Bloc which by the end of February was openly opposing the boycott (8I).

The threat by PUTCO to withdraw the buses and the government's move to pass legislation to ensure that they would not be replaced would have destroyed the long-term viability of the Alexandra community and with it the economic basis of the standholder group. They were well aware of the danger: Alexandra property owners met on March 3rd to discuss the economic implications of the withdrawal of the srevice(82).

However by March control of the boycott was slipping out of the hands of the standholders. On February 28th a fresh offer was made by the Chamber of Commerce: £25 000 was to be made available to finance a refund scheme in which people could claim a penny back on a cancelled 5d ticket. The proposals were put to members of the boycott committee and a majority vo in favour: among the four that abstained or voted against the proposal were Mokonyane and Motsele of the Madzunya group. The proposal was then put to a mass meeting the following day by the Chairman, Mahlangu, but he was shouted down by the crowd and Motsele burnt the paper on which the terms were written. By this stage the rift between the standholders and the political groups was public.

If the report that only four members of the committee voted against the proposal is accurate than the position of the ANC is puzzling. If they did vote at the committee's meeting in favour of the proposals then it was only a temporary wavering for on the Ist March a Congress leaflet entitled 'What is to be done' was circulated in the township explicitly rejecting the offer(83). The ANC's position in the boycott movement was now considerably stronger than it was at the beginning: for as well as Sophiatown and Lady Selbourne which started boycotting simultaneously with Alexandra, there were two other locations which were not affected by the PUTCO boycotts which staged sympathy boycotts under ANC direction. These were Moroka and Randfontein. All locations were united by a coordinating committee which had been set up by the ANC which was chaired by Alfred Nzo. The Lady Selbourne committee was a comparable coalition of interests to Alexandra: the initiative was taken by the Lady Selbourne Village Committee which was dominated by property owners; two years before it had evolved an insurence scheme to protect bondholders (84). The ANC branch also helped to lead the boycott. One reason why there may have been a greater degree of unity at Pretoria was that considerable brutality had been used to break up meetings and the police had shot and killed one man (85). There were also no comparable approaches to the boycotters made by Pretoria employers. The cutting of the PUTCO bus service was not such a drastic threat to the location as there was a train service as an alternative to the buses.

During March therewere beginning to develop contrasts in the appeals ma de by the different groups of boycott leaders. At a meeting on the IOth March ANC men told a crowd of 2000 that the boycott was no longer an economic struggle but was becoming a major political challenge to the government. Alfred Nzo was also beginning to talk about staging a stay-at-home (so far employers were agreed that there had been little absenteeism as a result of the boycott) (86). The Madzunya faction were emphasizing a nationalist theme. Motsele's speeches mentioned Nkrumah and Ghanian independence and after he spoke there were shouts of 'This is our mother country. We will die first' (87).
On the other hand Dan Mokonyane was to continue to insist that the boycott was 'not political' (88).

Negotiations began again on March I8th with the city council. This time

a system devised in which people would buy a 5d ticket for 4d with a subsidy going direct to the bus compnay. In addition PUTCO and the council would try and persuade the goverment to permenently subsidise the fares at a pre-boycott level out of the Native Services Levy. These negotiations caused a second division among the boycott organisers: the ANC was to support the scheme and an ANC pamphlet of April Ist urged peopl to use the PUTCO buses which began running again on that day. However Mokonyane and the Madzunya group opposed the new offer. This time they were unsuccessful: onlyone out of three meetings held on Sunday March 3Ist voted to continue the boycott(89). At a meeting on April 9th Mokonyane gave two reasons forcontinuing the boycott: no parallel arrangement had been made to lower fares at Lady Selbourne and no formal agreement had been signed with the Chamber of Commerce (90). However the pro-boycott faction were fighting a losing battle: by April 5th 48 000 people rode on the buses from Alexandra (9I).

There are several possible reasons for the shift in the ANC position. First it is possible that March saw a decline in the enthusiasm of the boycotters The offer they finally accepted was not so verydifferent from the original Chamber of Commerce proposal at the end of February - it was a temporary arrangement as the government agreement to subsidize PUTCO did not come until June, long after the boycott was over. After the buses were withdrawn on 1st March one of the objective tests of the boycotters willingness to walk no longer existed for they had no alternative. The meetings which rejected the offer were held at six o cloc in the evening: a time when many people would still have been on their way home. Secondly, during the month there was a discernable shift in white sympathy: newspapers reported a falling-off in the numbers of lifts offered to boycotters. At the same time it may be relevant that the ANC was more closely in touch with white liberal opinion than the other groups and therefore may have been more sensitive to this shift. Bishop Ree ves who was known to sympathise with the ANC had been closely associated with the negotiations that led up to the Chamber of Commerce offer. Thirdly the ANC, as we have seen,was not as concerned as other groups to stress the purely economic aspects of the boycott. During the boycott they pursued an active recruitment policy; ANC membership in Alexandra went up by six times (92). For the local ANC organisers the boycott was a considerable political success for during it they were able to eclipse their political rivals. It is also possible that the local ANC branch was under pressure from the national leadership to accept a settlement though there is no evidence for this (93). The decision to end the boycott certainly alienated Lady Selbourne. They were to be bitter about the lack of support after April from other twonships and they were left out of arrangment to subsidize fares from the Native Services Levy. Their unsuccesful boycott lasted for several more months and the Alexandra dissidents vainly urged a sympathy boycott (94).

Why did the boycott recieve such overwhelming and sustained support? Both PUTCO and the police admitted that there was no evidence that the boycotters were being intimidated into not using the buses.(95) The boycott lasted in the Western Areas without the aid of mass meetings; these were banned by the city council (96). First, the fare rise did represent a significant burden on a mont ly family income of less than £I5 and as has been mentioned social conditions in Alexandra were especiall desperate. Then a succesful boycott had recently been fought in Evaton; th could have provided some encouragement as might have the memory of the war-time boycotts in Alexandra itself. The initial unity of interests represented by the APTC was important: the boycott was energetically led with numerous mass meetings where the main decisions were taken. The original motives of the Standholders remain unclear. It is tempting to speculate that they may have hoped to profit from the boycott by organising alternative transport. But in fact there was no such move.

Instead there was a suggestion that an approach should be made to African bus-operators in Durban to start a service in Alexandra.(97) An important factor in the sustaining of the boycott was the response of employers. Industrialists were reported to be frightened of losing experienced workers: this may have been one reason why they initially adopted a cooperative approach. The willingness of commerce, industry and PUTCO to negotiate must have contributed to the boycotters' consciousness of their position. Finally the ANC's contribution was important: by organising sympathy boycotts (which for a period were also staged in Port Elizabeth and East London) they decreased the risk of boycotters feeling isolated and increased the pressure on the municipal authorities.

The ANC was most effective when it succeeded in identifying itself with the anxieties and concerns that arose from poverty. It's ability to do this very much depended on the sort of people who dominated it at branch level. In Sophiatown where its prominent office holders tended to be property owners it tried to reconcile the interests of the poor with their local exploiters. There was also a sharp conflict between generations a hostility which was expressed which was expressed by Vundla during the education campaign:

> I am getting tired of you young fellows always talking about the 'people'... I am not going to let you do as you please in our meeting and you will not dictate to your parents what to do. You are going too far and you do not want to be controlled. The mess that is in Congress today is because of you people.(98)

The education campaign was qualitively different from the opposition to the removals. A strong case can be made for arguing that the ANC evoked support from a much wider section of the community in the areas where the schools were boycotted and the correlation between those who supported the anti-boycott school in Brakpan and the people who were against the bus boycott the following year is interesting. In Alexandra the ANC was led by people who were not property owners and they were therefore able to align themselves with popular disatisfactic and to correctly estimate the limits of protest. So it is therefore difficult to generalise about the ANC at a branch level. What can be seen is that the involvement of ANC branches in communal politics was helping to create a gulf between them and a more wary provincial leadership. This came out at a special provincial congress in April I956 that was convened to discuss passes for women. It was decided that instead of a general campaign each branch should initiate action according to local circumstances. Many branch delegates were critical of the leadership for failing to take a lead on the issue. Among the most vocal critics was Joe Molefi, a leader of the Evaton bus boycott. The Evaton boycott was to recieve no outside assistance from Congress and significant the two ANC leaders involved, Molefi and Vus Make, were later to join the Pan Africanists.

The events in Alexandra suggest that there was a much wider and more general participation in protest and resistance than the opposition generated and led by the ANC would indicate. The ANC was only one of the groups involved and not the most radical. The boycott suddenly made the frustration and the anger of the local community visible.

Bus boycotts were a fairly common and noticeable form of protest on the Rand in the mid I950s: as suggested early in this paper the feelings of social despair that were behind them could also be channelled into other less well documented types of resistance. Until these are recorded our understanding of African opposition will be distorted.

I. L Forman, cited in Treason Trial record (henceforth TT). p II6I
2. TT II74
3. E Feit. African Opposition in South Africa. Stanford. I967. ppI3 -I5
4. A retrospective list is provided in 'The years since I946'. Fighting Talk, June I96I. p.9
5. E Feit. Urban Revolt in South Africa. Northwestern University Press. I97I p.74
6. The World Io 3 I956
7. The Katlegong boycott was different. It arose from a refusal by Germiston City Council to allow the registration of Katlegong taxi-drivers on the grounds that there were enough taxis in other locations to serve the township. See The World I2 II I955
8. Drum January I957 p.I5
9. M Horrell. A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa. I955-56. SAIRR p.96
I0 M Horrell. Ibid I956 - 57 p. 87
II. Ibid pp I66 - I70
I2. Handwritten report by W B Ngakane. R J Hoernle papers. Urban Affairs AD 843 B4 2.
I3 The World 8 I I955
I4. Ibid 22 I I955
I5. TT 7482
I6. The World 22 I I955
I7. The World 5 2 I955
I8. TT I202
I9. TT 7498
20. The World I9 2 I958
2I. Drum June I955
22. The World 22 2 I958
23. TT I289
24. The World 3 I2 I956
25. Rand Daily Mail I3 I I954
26. Fighting Talk April I955
27. The World I2 2 I955
28. Star 26 I0 I953
29. Ibid 6 I I953
30. TT 7500
3I The World 22 I I955 I9 2 I955
32. A biographical profile of Vundla appears in Drum January I956
33. Karis, Carter and Gerhart From Protest to Challenge Stanford I977. Vol
34. Horrell. Op cit. I956-57 p.I03
35. Karis, Carter and Gerhart Op cit p.I63
36. The World 7 5 I955
37. Ibid 27 7 I957
38. TT 7485 - 7500 Record of a Sophiatown Youth League meeting. 30 I I955
39. Drum June I955 World II 6 I955
40. The World 26 2 I956
4I. The SAIRR Annual Survey for I956-57 gives a percentage of 60% of families earning £I5 a month in I953. The average for Johannesburg townships was 48%
42. The World 26 2 I956
43. A Luthuli Let my people go London I963 p I32
44. Drum January I956 p 59
45. The World 24 I2 I956
46. Ibid 28 5 I956
47. Drum November I955
48. Janet Robertson Liberalism in South Africa Oxford I97I p I00
49. The World I0 9 I955
50. Ibid
5I. The World I0 I2 I955; I7 I2 I955

52. TT 24I3
53. The World 23 4 I955
54. TT 24I3
55. The World 7 5 I955
56. The World 30 4 I955
57. Here I am not completely sure. The provincial president owned a cafe in central Johannesburg and the secretary and treasuer were shopkeepers. I have not managed to trace the occupations of three of the seven other members of the executive.
58. The World 29 I0 I955
59. Ibid 8 I2 I956
60. Ibid 25 6 I956
6I. The Star 7 I I957 The Rand Daily Mail 8 I I957
62. The World I6 2 I957
63. Joe Rogaly 'The Bus Boycott' Forum March I957
64. See TT 26I9 and The World 5 II I955
65. Drum April I959
66. TT 2482 Transcript of speech in Alexandra, I9 6 I955
67. Carter, Karis and Gerhart Opcit p. 5 The World 23 6 I956
68. The World Io II I956
69. Ibid I7 8 I957
70. J Ngubane An African Explains Apartheid New York I962 p. I89
7I. Drum April I957 p.II
72. Rand Daily Mail I5 II I958, 7 6 I957, The Star 22 3 I957
73. Star 7 2 I957
74. Ibid I8 I I957
75. Ibid 29 I I957
76. Dan Mokonyane quoted in the Rand Daily Mail 28 2 I957
77. Star 20 I I957, 29 I I957.
78. Rand Daily Mail 25 2 I957
79. Rand Daily Mail 26 2 I957
80. The World I6 3 I957
8I. Rand Daily Mail 27 2 I957
82. Star 2 3 I957
83. Rand Daily Mail 2 3 I957
84. The World 30 4 I955
85. The World 9 2 I957
86. Rand Daily Mail II 3 I958, 7 3 I957
87. Ibid
88. The World 2 3 I957
89. Rand Daily Mail 2 4 I957
90. Rand Daily Mail 9 4 I957
9I. Ibid 6 4 I957
92. Ibid 27 2 I957
93. This is suggested in Socialist League of Africa 'I0 years of the Stay-at home', International Socialist (london) Summer I96I p.II
94. Mokonyane quoted in The World I7 8 I957
95. Star 30 I I957
96. Star 25 2 I957
97. The World 9 3 I957
98. The World 4 6 I955