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A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

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Title: The Union, The Nation, and the Talking Crow: The Ideology and Tactics of the Independent ICU in East London.

by: William Beinart and Colin Bundy

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In January 1930 a meeting was held at Headman Koliwe's location in Kentani district, Transkei. It was addressed by Elias Mabodla (or Agitator No. 53 as he was identified in a police report) who had come "to preach ICU amongst you people". He recounted how nine trade union leaders had been arrested in East London where they had called a strike. Their plight evoked strong sympathy in Kentani, especially as one of those arrested was a local man, Dorrington Mqayi. Headman Nkonki summed up the mood of the meeting: "It is for us to see into this matter as our blood is amongst those people in the gaol at East London."(1)

Fifty years later, during our research on rural popular movements we encountered Mqayi in his identity as an ICU "agitator" in Kentani. We then retraced his footsteps. In an archival echo of his journeys between the Transkei and the harbour city, we moved from the boxes holding the records of the Kentani magistracy to those of the East London Town Clerk. We had no way of knowing whether Mqayi would resurface in the East London documents, but began our search for him in speculative optimism. We did meet Mqayi again - but not him alone. Mqayi in East London was not the leading actor that he might have been on the smaller stage of Kentani; rather, he had a modest speaking part in a vibrant urban drama - a drama recorded in the vivid and detailed police records* of ICU activity in the Town Clerk's files.

Their six hundred pages recreate the atmosphere of the dusty commonage and the football field of the East Bank Location. In them one can hear speeches - tedious and gripping, halting and eloquent, shot through with sardonic humour, pent-up anger, and startling metaphorical flights - accompanied by prayers, hymns, and nationalist songs. They capture the energy of crowds of up to eight thousand people - or a gathering of fewer than two dozen loyalists, dourly demonstrating their commitment. The murmurous voices of these audiences, as well as the more fully recorded diction of the "agitators" addressing them, still echo in the police reports. From both leaders and followers it is possible to learn precise details of the pressures of existence in an urban slum and of how these were resisted and survived. The documents make audible not only the tensions, fears and frustrations of the menu peuple but also something of their collective view of themselves and of their relations with other communities - in short, their consciousness.

* These are described in the Note on Sources at the end of this essay.

This essay attempts the historical reconstruction of that consciousness; it explores the "complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble" of beliefs and attitudes which it comprised. We hope that it also achieves something more direct and less abstract: that it conveys a sense of the experience of the people concerned, and that it remains faithful to the vivid, concrete and passionate depiction by themselves of their lives and struggles.

(1) INTRODUCTION: EAST LONDON, TOWNSHIPS, HINTERLAND

The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) was founded in Cape Town in 1919 as a trade union, but in the mid-1920s it became the most effective mass-based Black political movement in South Africa, attracting a large following amongst the urban and rural poor. After several years of hectic growth that saw membership reach perhaps 100,000, in 1929 the union fell prey to leadership disputes, factionalism, and financial and organisational disarray; it declined rapidly in numbers and influence. One of the successor factions, the Independent ICU (IICU) had its major base in the Cape port of East London. Clements Kadalie, founder of the original ICU, moved to the city and the IICU was stronger in the Eastern Cape than anywhere else. Kadalie and his lieutenants alarmed the authoriti and attracted their surveillance: between 1928 and 1933 detectives in East London attended hundreds of ICU and IICU meetings and reported their proceedings. Through this substantial record it is possible to recreate a good deal of the intentions, tactics, and ideology of the ICU and IICU in East London in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The other chapters in this book all deal with rural political movements and it might appear that a study of a trade union in an urban setting is an odd companion piece. In fact, this exploration of urban popular ideology is linked in a number of ways to the concerns and themes of earlier chapters. East London's labouring population included a large proportion of people who retained homesteads and access to land in rural areas, notably in the Ciskei and in the southern Transkei. These migrant workers earned wages in East London, lodged there week by week or for longer periods, and collectively they exhibited a consciousness in which experience of town and countryside were both manifest. Immediate urban concerns over wages, living conditions and pass laws were intertwined with

anxieties about land, livestock and crops. There are thematic as well as geographical links between town and country as perceived through the record of the ICU and IICU in East London. In the harbour city as in rural districts, there is a clearly discernible pattern of pressures being exerted on political communicators from below. The interests and preoccupations of the labouring poor in East London were not always the same as those of the trade union officials - but the officials had to respond to those interests and to promote them if they were to secure a popular following. The ICU/IICU in East London was to be affected from below by mass action and by popular ideology in ways strikingly similar to those remarked in some of the rural case studies in this book. Furthermore, the East London material suggests striking similarities in the content of popular political consciousness in town and countryside during the 1920s - a new consciousness being shaped in the context of increasingly segregationist state policies.

To anticipate in broad outline the argument which is detailed below, we suggest that the ICU/IICU in East London underwent a transition. It moved away from an initial emphasis on organisational issues and from rather bureaucratic tactics to lay much more stress on three other elements: an explicitly Africanist position (strongly influenced by separatist Christianity); an articulation of specific urban underclass grievances (especially those of women); and an attempt to cobble together an alliance with popular forces in the city's rural hinterland. This last aspect - the attempted urban/rural alliance not only involved recruiting migrant workers and peasants under the IICU banner but also meant accepting rural chiefs as an appropriate focus for mobilisation. It was precisely because of the very strong links between East London's labouring population and the rural hinterland, and because of the complex nature of migrant worker consciousness, that there was a material interest behind this kind of alliance. Thus there is revealed in the language and content of the IICU speeches a complex interpenetration of different vocabularies and symbols - itself a reflection of the social diversity of the movement's mass base.

East London lies at the mouth of the Buffalo River, a natural harbour. Founded in the mid-nineteenth century, it developed as a seaport, railhead, and centre for the inland trade; by the early twentieth century it also housed light manufacturing industries. Larger-scale industrialisation by-passed the

city. In the 1920s and 1930s its was essentially an entrepot role: economic activity centred on its harbour, railway, merchant houses, small processing works, and craft shops. Central to the growth of the city had been its market in African produce and goods for African trade. By the 1920s its primacy as the wool-exporting port was under challenge; the slump in the price of wool and the general depression in trade after 1929 accentuated an air of genteel shabbiness.

East London was the largest urban centre in the area of the Eastern Cape known as "the Border". The name is significant. East London's hinterland had been South Africa's most fiercely contested frontier zone. Arena of a century's conflict between settlers and British troops and Xhosa chiefdoms, it bore the brunt of the wars of 1850-53 and 1877-78, the Cattle Killings of 1856-57, and the expropriations and population movements that created the chequerboard racial demography of the region. The politics of Africans in and around East London has, throughout the twentieth century, been deeply imprinted with local awareness of the decisive and punitive clashes in the nineteenth century.

This setting also shaped the identity of the black urban population of East London. The city's "locations" (Black townships) were from early on in their history the venue not only for migrants who retained homes in the countryside, but also a receptacle for refugees from the overpopulated black lands and capitalising white-owned farms. By the 1920s, the African population of East London was concentrated in two squalid slums on both sides of the Rooikrans river - East Bank and West Bank locations - the area of which had been broadly determined in the 1880s. Population growth in these townships was significant even before 1920 (see Table 1) but in that decade conditions in the rural hinterland sped the influx of permanently urbanised as well as of migrant workers to East London. By the twenties the process of rural impoverishment in the Ciskei and southern Transkei had intensified; the middle years of the decade witnessed a severe drought; and there were pressures (in the form of harsher conditions and/or evictions) on labour tenants and cash tenants on white-owned farms. In 1929 alone, there were over eleven hundred immigrants from rural areas recorded as entering the city - and there were undoubtedly others undetected in the statistics who entered in contravention of municipal and state regulations. Between 1919 and 1928 the African population of East London increased by 41.7 per cent; between 1925 and 1930 alone it rose by nearly 8500 - or an increase in five years of over 50 per cent.

Several features of the African population in East London are worthy of note. Firstly, it was a distinctly heterogenous population, and the most significant cleavage was that between the urbanised, semi-urbanised and wholly migrant sectors. Broadly, by the 1920s the urban population comprised three overlapping categories: those who lived permanently in and knew no other milieu than the city Locations; those who regarded themselves as rural dwellers and were in the city on a strictly migrant basis; and a third or marginal category whose decreasing access to rural livelihood of any sort was impelling them firmly if reluctantly into the status of permanent urban proletarians. These categories lack precision; but as rough-hewn sociological divisions they were recognised at the time by white and black observers. As to their relative size, an estimate in 1931 by the long-serving Location Superintendent Charles Lloyd was that about 20 per cent of the city's Africans "had lost touch with their tribes". In 1935, the estimate for this urbanised group was rather higher, at 30 per cent, with another 30 per cent "semi-urbanised" and 40 per cent "rural". (2)

Secondly, it was a population whose overwhelming majority endured material conditions of deprivation and insecurity. If East London as a whole was depressed by the late twenties, the racial division of wealth and power meant that the social ills attendant on urban growth were concentrated in the East and West Bank ghettoes. These were classic examples of urban slums thrown up by rapid but uneven capitalist development. White municipal government and rate-payers were resolutely indifferent to township conditions - unless they threatened to affect health standards in "white" East London, to pose law and order problems or to demand municipal expenditure. Even this deafness was challenged on a number of occasions by inescapably acute evidence of poverty and immiseration, so that a kind of recurrent scandal surfaced from year to year. It did so at the end of 1929 when the report of the Medical Officer of Health drew attention to the infant mortality rate in the city's locations: higher than in any other urban centre in South Africa, it reached the "appalling" rate of 543 deaths per 1000 births in that year - for the decade as a whole it averaged over 333 per 1000. (3) The provision of housing by the public authorities was grotesquely inadequate; most homes were privately built of corrugated iron, packing cases, and other salvaged material, and formed

> honeycombs of crudely constructed rooms, usually opening on a yard which itself could be dotted with low kennel-like structures, used as kitchens by day and as sleeping quarters by night for poorer families .... The location itself had an ugly social complexity arising out of differential access to property. (4)

Wage levels in East London were low, both in relation to those prevailing in other urban centres and to the cost of living. Especially for the under-employed and unemployed, life was a constant crisis of subsistence.

Thirdly, and to cope with the strains thus imposed, the township dwellers developed a host of craft and "informal sector" activities. Some sought precarious livings as vendors of fresh food (marketed from urban plots, brought in from surrounding farms, or processed illegally - without licences - so as to undercut city prices), carters, artisans, woodsellers,and the like. Of particular importance to the township economy were two functions largely carried out by women: the provision of lodgings for migrant males (and sometimes for their dependants as well) and the brewing and sale of beer. All these aspects - the fragmented nature of the urban labour force, the strong rural links, the economic hardships and pressures of township life, the centrality of housing and brewing as popular concerns - were to make themselves felt politically, to press from below upon the IICU. They were to become part of the consciousness and programme of the trade union activists in 1930.

By the 1920s, organised political acticity in the townships had a long history [5] and reflected their social divisions. Since the 1890s a quasi-official "location committee" and a Vigilance Association (Iliso lomzi) had operated; the former was dominated by the handful of black clergymen, teachers and clerks who were also active in Voters' Associations and local branches of the A.N.C. and Bantu Union. They played several roles. At times they acted (or sought to act) as spokesmen for the black community as a whole, presenting grievances through formal channels; sometimes they acted as mediators, as for example striving to arbitrate during a strike; on yet other occasions their interests and activities were more narrowly defined and were predominantly aimed at securing advantages or concessions for themselves as distinct from the mass of the African population. The undisputed leader of this group was Dr. Walter Rubusana, who moved to East London during the late 1890s. In 1921, the standing and influence of Rubusana and others (including R.H. Godlo and J.J. Vimbe) was institutionalised with the creation of a Location Advisory Board. This body became the formal and the only recognised channel between the municipality and township opinion. The extent to which Rubusana and the others could exercise this representative function was sharply constrained by popular suspicions and resentment of this elite. The Board members were elected, in any case, only by the leaseholders in the Locations, and many of the migrant and casual labourers living as lodgers would have had little sense of the clerics and clerks as their spokesmen.

The Vigilance Association, although also headed by educated men, represented a broader social spectrum and (like its counterparts in rural areas) tended to be more sensitive to popular issues. The Advisory Board and Vigilance Association had a fluctuating relationship. At times, the "Vigilance Association worked in loose conjunction with the Advisory Board, in that the six elected Board members used to report back to the Association, and receive a sort of mandate from it to put the people's views";[6] but on other occasions they clashed. One commentator noted that in the 1920s it became evident "that the personal interests of members elected to advisory boards were often incompatible with those of the people as expressed through the vigilance associations", and once the Vigilance Association actually tried to unseat the representative on the Board.[7] The Vigilance Association executive was elected by leaseholders and holders of lodgers' permits; its meetings "used to be crowded out by hundreds of participants" and the Association was consequently more credibly "recognised as representing 'the people's views'." [8] The scanty evidence available for the Association suggests that it maintained fairly close links with its grassroots constituency; that it represented independent Xhosa churches rather than mission-linked churches; and that on occasions it threw its weight behind the agitation for higher wages and at other times was concerned with rural issues like land and livestock. An informant told Mayer in the 1950s that the Association used to function "exactly like an inkundla in the country, with the difference that not only men could attend, but the old and young of both sexes". [9]

As well as the Board and Association, there were also attempts to provide political leadership in the black community by the (Cape) ANC, the ICU and (after April 1929) the Independent ICU. A branch of the ICU was first established in East London in 1922; but even then it was not the case that "outside" organisers moved into the city to create a labour movement on a tabula rasa. There was already a distinct pattern of worker militancy in the town, centred - as in many colonial settings - in the harbour and rail labour force, which the ICU inherited and tried to extend. In 1911 a strike of dock-workers (followed by a wave of strikes in the city) won a wage increase of sixpence per day. In 1918 steep cost of living increases triggered another broadly based outbreak of labour unrest in East London which led the Town Council and Chamber of Commerce to recommend all-round pay increases. The East London Native Employees Association of 1920 is the first recorded instance

of a worker-based organisation in the town. It was active in another strike by harbour workers in 1921, which was broken by the importation of workers from Port Elizabeth and the surrounding coungryside. (10) It is not clear how active a presence the ICU branch maintained between 1923 and 1927. The national conference was held in the city in 1924, but there is little other evidence that the local body made much headway until after the spectacular national expansion of the ICU in 1926 and 1927.

The rest of this essay will be largely concerned to chart the shifts that took place between 1928 and 1931 in the discourse of the trade union organisers - changes in their language and rhetoric, in what issues they emphasised and in what interests they voiced. This is not to suggest that there was a consistent and unchanging ideology in the movement before 1928. The ICU in the 1920s displayed a number of different ideological facets: the stress on union organisation and strikes in the early twenties; the flirtation with Communism and its subsequent repudiation; the involvement in rural areas and the adoption of rural grievances. The ideological basis of the ICU was in a process of constant reformulation as new localities, new interests, and new organisers representing these, were caught up in the movement. This ideological fluidity was a natural reflection of the diversity of its mass base, "the ill-defined groups of dissidents characteristic of early industrialisation". (11)

At the same time, there were a number of ideological continuities, basic features of the aims and outlook of the movement, which - while they might be modified by or mingled with other elements - remained central and intact. Through an examination of speeches made by organisers of the East London branch of the union it is possible to establish a clear set of preoccupations and prescriptions for the period up to the formation of the IICU in April 1929. It is essential to identify and analyse this ideological matrix in some detail, in order to pinpoint subsequent departures and developments. Section 2, below, is devoted to such an identification and analysis. Section 3 looks at the immediate shifts in rhetoric and tactics that were displayed by the IICU between April and December 1929. Section 4 is an account of the strike of 1930 mounted by the IICU, while section 5 examines the aftermath of the strike and the way in which the IICU responded to a range of popular ideological concerns, including specific township grievances and rural issues. A concluding section 6 includes a discussion of the strains placed on the IICU by the shifts in tactics and ideology.

(2) ICU IDEOLOGY IN EAST LONDON, JANUARY 1928 - APRIL 1929

The East London branch was fairly buoyant at the beginning of 1928, having benefited from the surge in membership and popularity of the movement at large. Local organisers held open air meetings almost every Sunday near the dipping tanks in the East Bank Location. The most regular speakers at these meetings were officials of the national ICU in the Eastern Cape - Theo Lujiza, Mac Jabavu, and John Mzaza - and two members of the local branch committee, Alfred Mnika and Joel Magade. The first-named trio were very much in the mould of the respectable, petty bourgeoise trade union officials. Lujiza served for a number of years on the Location Advisory Board; a white lawyer wrote in 1927: "He is a peaceful, law-abiding native of temperate character and I would be greatly surprised if anything he said or did stirred people to unlawful actions."(12) Jabavu was the second son of J.T. Jabavu and was if anything even more self-consciously respectable than Lujiza. Mnika came from East London and Magade from the Transkei; both men usually addressed their audiences in Xhosa and also served as interpreters when Kadalie and others spoke in English. In the first few months of 1928, the ICU meetings generally attracted crowds of a few hundred people, climbing to 600 or more when Kadalie spoke, when local men reported on national meetings, or when a particular episode fanned indignation. After April 1928 and for the next twelve months, however, attendances fell sharply and meetings seldom drew as many as one hundred listeners. These attendance figures (see Table 2) are of some importance for our analysis; for while they do not reflect the full range of the union's activities they provide a rough index of the popular support and interest generated by the movement in East London.

Falling attendances in mid-1928 were symptomatic of wider problems of the ICU in South Africa. The expansionary surge of 1926/7 was halted and reversed; feuds within the leadership tore the union apart; and four rival bodies all claimed to be the true descendants of the ICU in its halcyon days. It was in August 1928 that William Ballinger arrived in South Africa to act as adviser to the ICU; his attempts to place the finances of the union on a new footing accelerated the wrangles and splits. Indirectly, however, the fracturing of the parent body helped rekindle local enthusiasm. More specifically, the Independent ICU (the faction established in April 1929 and led by Kadalie himself) made East London its de facto headquarters. Kadalie and Tyamzashe (a national organiser originally from East London) were joined by the local activists, Mnika

and Magade. The "Old ICU" (now closely associated with Ballinger) retained an East London branch, led by Lujiza and Mzaza. It became apparent within a couple of months that in East London at least the IICU was a more popular vehicle than the Old ICU. It rapidly demonstrated an ability to draw crowds of 400, 500 or 600 people, while the numbers attending Old ICU meetings dwindled to 60, 40 or fewer (on several occasions the turn-out was so thin that the detective taking notes at the meeting could count heads and report that twenty-two or sixteen men and women were present). The Old ICU did manage to attract 600 people when Ballinger spoke in September 1929 - but many in the audience were there to heckle; the meeting ended in a fracas and Ballinger had to be escorted from the township by police.

(i) "Stick to your Union" - organisation and fund-raising:

Through the entire period for which ICU and IICU speeches in East London are recorded, perhaps the most consistent theme was the preoccupation of organisers with the need for organisational unity, loyalty, obedience and the payment of subscriptions. Exhortations to join the union, to remain faithful, and to fulfill financial obligations to it regularly punctuate the transcripts of meetings. "You must have courage and stick to your Union", adjured Mnika in the midst of a typical speech (19/2/28).* Kadalie made the same point in his more flamboyant style: "Smuts and Hertzog would like to shoot me, but my last words would be 'stick to your union'". (20|9|29) The concern with organisational issues in a recently established union is understandable, and expressed the difficulties faced by the movement. In 1928, organisers were trying to sustain interest in a flagging movement; without the loyalty they insistently demanded the survival of their trade union itself seemed to be at stake. The stress on unity also reflected the challenge of trying to organise a highly heterogenous constituency: it included industrial workers, casual labourers and unskilled workers, domestic servants, and the urban unemployed; it spanned permanently urbanised men and women as well as those moving between town and countryside. There were some attempts to mobilise specific target groups of workers in 1928, but that was not

* All quotations from CA, 1/ELN, box 86 file c3 (1) and box 87 file c3 (2) (see Note on sources) are identified in the body of the essay by the date of the meeting being reported. Other sources are footnoted in the normal way.

the main thrust of the ICU approach. Its activists were guided by a conception of themselves as leaders of a mass movement rather than of an industrially based trade union; the ICU represented "your salvation therefore every man should be a member" (28/7/29). Unity was not simply a desirable goal but virtually the precondition on which the promise of deliverance was based.

Financially, the ICU depended on membership fees (a joining fee of 2/6d was followed by monthly dues of 6d) and on the income from ad hoc collections taken at meetings. Though the union had a core of support in the city, its membership in the twenties was not based on steady growth but on rapid rises and falls. This meant that there was a constant pressure for new recruitment simply to keep the branch solvent. Compounding this problem was the tendency for members to join, pay for their tickets, but then let their subscription lapse. Threats that the membership of defaulters would be cancelled did not carry much weight while the union could deliver little in the way of concrete benefits for its members. The ICU in East London operated under conditions of chronic financial neediness. It constantly appealed for cash donations to finance legal costs, journeys by the leaders, the entertainment of visiting dignitaries, or to swell funds being raised in solidarity with campaigns elsewhere. The hat was passed round at nearly every meeting.

For those on whom subscriptions or donations were being levied, the cash payments had political as well as financial dimensions. Payment of a membership subscription was a declaration of commitment and a legitimation of a new source of authority and leadership. Equally, those who paid wanted to know what returns were likely on their investment. This had two effects: it fed into the "insurrectionary" approach of the ICU (the sweeping promises of imminent deliverance) and it lent an edge to the frequent accusations of financial mismanagement or peculation brought by members against their leaders. These tensions were frequently visible in ICU speeches. The organisers had to persuade their hearers not only of the urgent need for money but also of the probity of those who were collecting it. "ICU members must pay our subs" urged Mnika,

> because if we don't pay we cannot fight the law without funds ... we always collect money to fight the Government .... Try and pay your fees and don't think we want the money for ourselves. The money is much needed to carry on the good work that is being done all over the country on our behalf, you here at present will benefit by it some day. (11/11/28)

(ii) "To better your condition" - workers and wages:

The ICU were self-consciously trade unionists, but they seldom invoked the language of class solidarity or class struggle, nor did they see their goal in terms of worker control. Kadalie occasionally but atypically sought to claim a place for the ICU within a working class internationalism: "Workers throughout the world are forming themselves into bodies and taking as their motto that employers must be controlled by workers." (21.1.30). The rarity of such expressions by ICU leaders cannot be ascribed solely to fears that such radicalism would invite governmental wrath. For one thing, there is a consistent strand of reformism running through even those statements which explicitly posed the struggle as one of workers against employers. Moreover, the conflict was more frequently depicted as one of an oppressed black nation - in which (as will be seen) a stronger current of radicalism did flow.

More characteristic than demands for worker control was a defensive and melioristic trade union rhetoric. Audiences were urged in general terms to "unite and be prepared to protect yourselves against the exploiters of labour" or assured that their leaders' "chief object is to better the conditions of every native in Africa". (4.3.28 and 3.2.29). But it was cerainly not a political class struggle which was advocated as the passage to victory for an African working class. In their more cautious moments (and these were not infrequent) they explicitly divorced themselves from political action. "The ICU does not intend to rebel against any government", said Lujiza "but will approach the government to try and get ... a better wage for the natives, and better conditions." (22/1/28) Magade assured his audience that the union was "not against the government" but was "only trying to get the employers of labour to better your conditions". (28/3/28) The same speaker distanced himself from agitation against the pass laws, arguing that "We cannot expect any better treatment by such wild sayings." (15/4/28) Lujiza and Mzaza went even further, justifying pass laws as an extension of controls imposed in traditional African societies by elders over young men. (8.7.28).

Wage demands were frequently clothed in the language of respectability. Minka insisted:

> We are not against any government, we are only out to ask the various employers of native labour to pay the natives a little more money for their labour, so that they will be able to live better and clothe themselves more respectable. (26/2/28)

Another speaker explained that the ICU was "not a home for thieves or drunkards or people of bad conduct, but was trying "to make good men of the natives so that they can be looked on as reliable men." (11/3/28) Again, it was explained that the ICU was "going to agitate until we have better conditions and are paid better wages so that we can live in a similar way to the white people." (9.6.29) In pursuit of these better wages, the ICU leadership placed great hopes on negotiations through the Wages Board established under the 1925 Wage Act to investigate and implement minimum wages in particular cases. A successful appeal by black workers in Bloemfontein, and the fact that the Board could be approached by African workers' organisations (although their status under the Wage Act was unclear) encouraged these hopes. As Kadalie, expansively, put it: "I like the Prime Minister for one good thing he has done, and that is appointing a wage board." (24/6/28)

(iii) "To build a strong nation" - black nationalism and the ICU:

The concern for respectability was not solely indicative of a meliorist and cautious trade union approach. It also encompassed a struggle for dignity and a protest against the alienation of workers, especially when this alienation had racist overtones. Speakers complained about the behaviour of white employers, who used neither the Xhosa names nor even the given christian names of their employees, but called them simply "Jim, John, Jane or Annie" (15/12/29). The sense of alienation was, however, translated by ICU speakers into a a call for nation-building: this would give blacks - in an increasingly racially defined system of oppression - the hope of dignity and collective self-respect. Thus, disavowals of all but gradual reforms in the trade union sphere were accompanie by promises of liberation and transformation in the political world. Mnika expressed this forcefully in a passage linking the humanity of workers (an argument against their alienation) with their identity as members of a black nation:

> Don't behave any longer as if you are constructed machines, but wake up and realise that you are human beings and that you have feelings to other human beings, and always remember the ICU is out to help you. This black nation of ours has to be recognised as a nation; and the ICU will build you into a nation if you will only stick to it. Your black brothers are

> working hard to organise you .... You natives must be released from bondage and oppression, you must be treated as human beings, not as machines, you must be faithful to the organisation and pay your subscriptions .... The ICU intend to reign all over Africa not in one little part. (19/2/28)

The creation of a strong black nation meant the creation of unity across divisions amongst blacks. ICU leaders often deplored the old "tribal" divisions and called for the recognition of a single nationhood amongst Xhosas, Zulus, BaSotho, and so on. Ultimately black unity offered greater rewards than collaboration with whites: Mfengu and Gqunukwebe had once been rewarded with land for helping the whites, but it was now being taken from them - "It is no use trying to be the white man's good boy." (10/6/28) A new nation would achieve new goals, united by blackness rather than divided by tribal customs - and the ICU was the new means to this end. Black self-consciousness and self-help was a strong component in the rhetoric of nation-building. "We must be like Garvey", proclaimed Mnika: despite imprisonment "he still worked hard to better the conditions of his fellow black men." (13.5.28) The ICU branch gave a sympathetic hearing to Elijah Dyantyi in January 1929 when he proposed opening black cooperative stores and boycotting European establishments:

> The stores should sell all sorts of groceries and drapery and would also buy your wool, skins and mealies. The whole business would be worked by the [elected] committee ... young native girls would be employed in the stores and would receive a proper wage for their work. By starting with these stores you would improve your brains and you would soon be recognised ... (27/1/29)

This rhetoric of self-improvement was of course not unique to the ICU; it is strongly reminiscent of strains within the contemporary ANC and the separatist church movement.

Black nation-building, it was frequently mentioned, was not a violent course: "I do not mean fight with guns or sticks, but I mean fight by constitutional methods" and "I told them straight away that the ICU had not been formed to spill blood, but to build us into a nation" were typical assurances. (12.2.1928) Other examples of successful nationalism were cited. The English had been "living in caves and dressed in animal skins" when the Romans found them and "were treated just as our forefathers were a hundred years ago" - explained Lujiza - but the English had learned (as Africans must now) that "blood is thicker than water". (8/7/28) Despite the hostility often shown towards Afrikaners, the success of Hertzog and the

National Party in agitating and rising to power was several times held up as a model of national mobilisation. the ICU, in short, advocated a gradualist and non-violent national struggle as a resistance to racial oppression - which was seen as fundamental to their subordination.

Concomitant with black nationalism was a generalised hostility towards whites, perceived collectively as oppressors of the black nation. Explicitly, even those who professed to be "your white friends", warned Magade, were

> your bitterest enemies, so please beware of them. The white people do not like Kadalie because he is making the AmaXhosa understand that they have been exploited for years and years and oppressed by the whites ... (5/2/28)

Anti-white rhetoric was usually modified and guarded. There were frequent attempts to differentiate between "good" whites (especially overseas) and "bad" whites; English and Afrikaner whites were compared to the detriment of the latter; and the ICU leadership disapproved of the pungently anti-white language of the Wellington movement in 1928 and 1929. Instances of white racism - like the sacking of the ICU office in Greytown, Natal, by local vigilantes - were bitterly attacked; but even these tones were tempered by fairly frequent expressions of trust in the rule of law and a "colour-blind" court system.

Another way in which the ICU speakers sought to establish their nationalist credentials was by making a sharp distinction between themselves and those held to be collaborating with white oppressors. Considerable disdain was reserved for "intellectuals": they were "like Judas"; they spent people's money on lawyers; they could be bought off. "If the ICU was for intellectuals", said Kadalie, "it would be like many other past native organisations; it would soon be defunct." (24.6.28). Bodies like the Transkeian General Council ("whitemen and good boys") were dismissed as elitist. The ICU spokesmen were at pains to deny their own elite status; Kadalie was "proud of being leader of raw natives". (24/6/28) Whatever the basis in fact of this claim, it is typical of ICU efforts to portray their movement and its relations with popular elements as quite different from groups of elite leaders serving elite organisations.

(iv) <u>"God has sent Kadalie" - chiefs, rural issues, and Christianity</u>

ICU leaders evinced rather ambiguous attitudes towards hereditary African chiefs. It was around chiefs that particularist loyalties - cutting across

nationalist aims - could coalesce, and chiefs were also regarded as representative of rural backwardness. At the same time, it was a political reality in rural areas that if chiefs were hostile to the ICU it would be difficult to recruit their followers as members. So on the one hand there were warnings against traditional authorities: "Your native chiefs will not build you into a strong nation, but the ICU will" (12/2/28) and "They are paid servants of government ... they are selling us to the white people". (28.5.29). On the other hand, there was a warm welcome for any chief who expressed interest in the tenets of the ICU and shared its national approach. There were several such instances in 1928, and links were established with senior Transkeian chiefs like Poto and Dalindyebo.

The ICU sallies into the Ciskei and Transkei in 1928 derived from recent ICU experience in South Africa at large. The response to the union's message in rural areas during 1926 and 1927 meant that it was impossible for the leadership to consider the organisation of urban workers as their sole (or even their primary) aim. The East London branch looked to rural self-help schemes in Natal as a model, and Lujiza in particular favoured a scheme of co-operative farm purchases. Bids could also be made from the countryside for ICU support; Chief Mrweto of Peddie - involved in protracted resistance to government land policies - made it clear that he was not a member of the movement but that he had "come to East London to get assistance from my people to fight the Government for a piece of ground". (18/11/28) But rural issues remained largely separate from urban; the two were to become much more closely intertwined during the after the IICU strike of 1930.

The attitude of the ICU leaders to churches and Christianity was another defining feature of their overall position. The East London hinterland was an area strongly influenced by Christian missions and by the development of independent churches; the leaders themselves had all been exposed to mission education. The bible was a frequent source of imagery: and particularly striking was the use of religious idioms of unity, salvation and leadership. The ICU should be built up like a new Jerusalem; Kadalie was a new David "ordained by God to lead the African to a new Africa". Nineteenth century Xhosa prophecies "that we should be a scattered tribe" had come true - "but the ICU is going to bring us together again." (4.3.28). God, said another speaker, had "sent Kadalie to us to deliver us from the oppression in which we have lived all these years." (26.4.28)

Apart from the political metaphors derived from the scriptures, the stance of the ICU towards organised religion was ambivalent. Lujiza did not "believe in church going, crying and weeping" - but he also acknowledged that "Church laws will assist us to remember that blood is thicker than water." (8.7.28) Kadalie was sarcastic about the values and attainments of the converted elite: "Umfundisi tells you that you won't go to heaven unless you pay your church dues." In Alice he warned a missionary meeting that if they continued to criticise the ICU they would find they had no church members left. (24.6.28) Magade denounced the schisms within the church as divisive, and feared parallel splits within the union. It is probably accurate to sum up the position of the ICU leaders towards mission Christianity as sceptical. But they were not yet wedded to the African separatist churches (which were winning large numbers of converts from the urban and rural poor in the 1920s). They did not and possibly could not endorse Wellington Buthelezi's boast that he would break down the white churches and schools; nor his claim that Christ was not white and that blacks should have their own churches.[13]

In the same way that the ICU did not use separatist Christian ideology in appealing to its urban and rural constituencies at this stage, nor did it take up popular local grievances. The reluctance of the leaders to take a clear stand on issues like location permits and passes has been mentioned. Another topic on which the ICU was virtually silent was domestic beer brewing. The only references to beer in this period were couched as injunctions against drunkeness (seen as a barrier to successful union organisation). Faced with falling attendances at meetings in 1928, Magade blamed this on those who "roam the location drinking Kaffir Beer". (4/3/28) The organisers' insensitivity to beer brewing as a potential political issue was duplicated in their attitude to women. Women could join the ICU, but were accommodated in a separate branch and were viewed as tea makers and social organisers rather than as fully involved union members. (20/5/28) Kadalie welcomed the support of women, but as a source of pressure on their husbands rather than in their own right: "If your husbands are not members of the ICU divorce them. Throw them over for members" was his jovial advice. (4.6.28) When some East London women left the ICU for the Wellington Movement's blend of radical Africanism and separatist religion, Mzaza upbraided them in classically paternalist tones:

> There is no reason why the women members should leave. They were given a hall where they could hold meetings and a secretary to whom they could make any complaint. I don't know what more they want. (17/2/29)

While women always attended ICU meetings, there was little consideration or representation at this period of their particular interests.

The findings of this section may be briefly summarised. The ICU speeches before April 1929 essentially voiced a broadly nationalist position. Its trade union approach stressed the virtues of organisational unity and the need for funds and was little concerned with class based political action. Although there was an undercurrent of Africanism and anti-white rhetoric, these were unusually qualified by acknowledgements of the benefits of "white" civilisation and by protestations of the movement's moderation. Africanist statements were characteristically couched in improving exhortations to self-help and self-respect. Allowing for ambiguities and shades of emphasis between different speakers, the leadership articulated the position of a petty bourgeoisie making claims to leading a national struggle, to build a nation in its own image. Popular township grievances made only fleeting appearances in the rhetoric, and the leadership was not notably close to the demands of a mass base in the East and West Bank locations. Nevertheless, the ICU ideology contained the potential for more radical and popular departures. Kadalie was jealous of his reputation as a firebrand; he projected himself as a popular leader and had visions of a mass following. The ICU leadership perceived themselves as different from the small coterie of "goodboys" who dominated formal township politics; by inference, their links with rank and file East Londoners were also different. In the anti-white and anti-mission sentiments lay the seeds of a more radical populist approach. There was considerable scope for rapid ideological shifts, and, as the next section argues, these began to occur almost simultaneously with the establishment of the Independent ICU in April 1929.

(3) THE INDEPENDENT ICU, APRIL 1929 - JANUARY 1930

Almost immediately after the formation of an IICU branch (in the first weeks of April 1929) there were perceptible changes in position and rhetoric. This must be explained partly by changes in personnel. Mzaza, Jabavu and Lujiza represented the more conservative elements before April 1929, and they stayed with the Old ICU. Kadalie and other national organisers visited East London during the first weeks of the new branch's life, but the local stalwarts Mnika and Magade became even more prominent in the IICU. It is especially in the

speeches and actions of these two men, and also in addresses by other local activists (Tshingile, Vandala, Ntame and Mciza) now making their debuts on the IICU platform that the new rhetorical positions are evident. At the second meeting of the IICU Magade declared exuberantly "We are now agitators like there are in Russia" (21.4.29): leaving aside the accuracy of his claim, one can surely detect in it a sense of renewal and escape from the constraints and infighting of the old ICU .

The very formation of the IICU branch instilled a new dynamism in meetings. Kadalie's renown, self-confidence and bombastic speeches contributed an almost palpable energy. The IICU could credibly portray itself as a new force, making a fresh start. Also, while the old ICU must at times have felt like a very distant outpost of the main organisation, the IICU's East London branch rapidly became the main testing ground for the new body. This alone may have made links between union organisers and the township inhabitants a more urgent matter, hence making the former more sensitive to the interests of the latter. Between the formation of the IICU branch and its launching of a strike (in mid-January 1930) three areas can be identified where the shifts in the political position of the leadership were most pronounced:

(i) the IICU's concern to articulate workers' grievances and to organise amongst workers; (ii) the development of an overt and more radical Africanism; and (iii) the increased importance of religious legitimation and closer links with independent churches. These are discussed in this section.

Ideological developments on three other fronts - township issues; rural organisation; and the impact of aspects of popular folk culture (including millenial beliefs) - can also be detected during this period. But their impact was far greater <u>after</u> the 1930 strike, and they will be discussed in sections 5 and 6 below.

(i) <u>Workers, wages, and the decision to strike</u>:

As suggested, the IICU had both incentive and opportunity to focus on specific local issues and to organise around these. The vitality of the new movement was going to depend on its ability to win a large following in the city which had effectively become its showcase; this in turn meant being able to identify and to support popular demands. This position also had to be staked out in competition with the Old ICU, which continued to hold

regular meetings in East London, and whose speakers denounced the IICU "renegades" with as much passion as the IICU used in attacking Old ICU "sell-outs". Both bodies sought to establish themselves as the legitimate organ of the East London townships and hinterland. In this competition, Kadalie and the Independents were overwhelmingly successful.

At the outset, as they sought their footing, the IICU leaders agitated over several issues which had only limited popular currency. Mnika tried to establish their new identity by emphasising the farm purchase scheme, a programme dear to the elements of the central leadership which followed Kadalie into the IICU. To finance the purchases, the East London IICU called for £1 donations from individual members. It also sought cash to build a hall for union meetings. These expensive projects continued to feature in IICU speeches throughout 1929, but increasingly in ways which indicated the difficulties of raising such substantial sums. Kadalie's own visit in April 1929 did little to chart a new direction for the IICU: he was mainly concerned to justify his stand over the fission in the union and to attack Ballinger. It was the visit of the charismatic national leader Keable 'Mote (the "lion of the north") in May/June 1929 which set the IICU on course for its spectacular rise in popularity. Mote was a fiery speaker who had been an advocate of direct action in the ICU before the split; he was, with Kadalie, one of the first people charged under the "sedition" clause of the 1927 Native Administrati Act. He also came to East London explicitly to organise. In a series of rousing meetings, attended by between one and our hundred people, he promised

> to organise the black races of this town .... I can assure you that before I leave East London a good many Natives will have joined the Independent ICU .... I want every man and woman to join so that we can fight this lodgers permit business .... We can also send petitions to the Government in regard to the prohibitions of Kaffir Beer being brewed in your homes, our women are daily being sent to gaol ... (26/5/29)

Quite apart from the general brio of his address, 'Mote's comparative experience was important: he came from Bloemfontein, where permission had been won to brew beer for domestic consumption, and (as the quoted extract shows) he ranged over several township issues when speaking to East Londoners.

Of equal importance, he took up the question of wages more vigorously and more concretely than the ICU branch had done during the previous eighteen months. Low wages and a generalised poverty were pervasive facts of township life in 1929. The black population had bee swollen during the late twenties

by men and women displaced by poverty from rural areas, and their presence exacerbated a state of "chronic poverty and unemployment" (14) in the townships. Two fairly detailed efforts to draw up cost of living figures for black families were undertaken in 1929, by the IICU and by the MOH. A monthly domestic expenditure of, respectively, £7-13-7 and £5-1-6 was arrived at by these two investigations; even on the lower figure (the MOH acknowledged) the "actual monthly expenditure for the average family" exceeded the average income. Average wages for labourers were between £4 and £5 per month; female domestic servants earned between 25s. and 30s. (15) It was in the context of a labour surplus and depressed incomes that 'Mote pressed his and the IICU's campaign for higher wages in East London.

Starting with the premise that "all native workers of this country are in need of increased wages", 'Mote blended a promise of material gain, nation-building and organisational unity: "I say the black races of South Africa must unite and when we are properly united we shall be able to demand a hearing and say what we require." He wrote letters to the South African Railways, the City Council, and other leading employers of black labour in the city, seeking direct negotiations on wage levels. He left East London in June (and was shortly to depart from the IICU itself) but his initiatives were pursued by Magade and Mnika. Throughout July, August and September 1929 IICU speeches were largely taken up with the issue of wages and negotiations (directly with employers and also through the Wage Board) by the union on behalf of workers. These negotiations produced no concrete results, and failed to satisfy rank and file expectations. Pressure from below was being exerted - Mnika mentioned that members were complaining "that we do not force the Europeans to increase your wages" - and resisted: he added that "we cannot hurry in such a matter; it takes time to find out how demands are going to be received." (21/7/29)

But what if the demands were <u>not</u> received? By the end of July, the ICU organisers showed signs of abandoning their previous caution. Magade, for the first time, warned of possible strike action "if the European employers do not listen to us". (14.7.29) Increasingly, the notion of strike action and - by corollary - of the power of organised workers began to surface in IICU speeches. By September, Mnika was encouraging his hearers with the argument that even domestic servants, if united, could wield economic power:

> The IICU is going to work hard to get the native wages increase. We are going to ask every European who employs native labour to increase the native wage, and if not they will find one morning that he will not have his native servant to light his fire, cook

> his breakfast, brush his shoes, clean his garden, clean his motor car or groom his horse. The European Mrs. will have to do the washing and cooking and all her house work if she is not prepared to pay the native servant girl sufficient wages. (1/9/29)

The readiness to confront employers and to offer more radical leadership to workers arose partly out of local conditions, but also partly out of the competition with the Old ICU . The Old ICU had lost the battle to attract larger crowds, but was also pushing a policy of wage negotiations - and even arguing that their greater respectability gave them an edge in seeking negotiations: "Mnika is not a man who can go and interview the Wages Board." (8.9.29) One way for the IICU to distinguish its approach to wages from that of the Old ICU was to look beyond cautious and bureacratic approaches to the Wage Board and the Rail authorities, and to entertain the notion of strike action. Kadalie returned to East London in September 1929, and worker claims took on a more precise definition: the IICU wanted an increase for rail and dock workers from about 3/6d per day to 6/6d (the old ICU was bargaining for 4/6d). Kadalie's rhetoric waxed even more belligerent: "we are not afraid", he told his audience. "Hertzog hates me and I hate him like hell, the bugger. I am a bad native and I will remain a bad native .... they call me an agitator and I will remain an agitator." (20/9/29)

It was the breakdown of negotiations with the Railways and Harbour management, and their denial that their employees came under the jurisdiction of the Wage Board, that polarised the situation. By December, Magade and Mnika were concentrating on organising and recruiting amongst this key group of workers. They were encouraged in their activities by a success in winning higher wages for the employees in some small factories. In early January, the IICU held its first annual conference in East London. Experienced organisers from around the country moved into the city - including Robert Kadalie, Maduna, Sijadu and others - and they addressed meetings in East Bank Location. The conjuncture of this conference and the possibility of a strike (promised by Kadalie if the rail and dock increases could not be won by bargaining) attracted very large crowds to IICU meetings: speakers were addressing gatherings of up to 1500 people in early and mid-January.

The extra organisational weight provided by the visitors, coupled with the heightened expectations of the workers, lent a distinctly more aggressive mood amongst local leaders. "We have been too loyal" declared one speaker; "I am the son of a warrior", claimed another. (8.1.30). Kadalie

characteristically announced his intention "to fight the buggers" and "go the whole damn hog". (16/1/30) A feature of the rhetoric of January 1930 was that the theme of violence surfaced in various ways. There was a persistent recitation of the history of violence visited on the Xhosa and of the everyday experience of the callous brutality of inter-racial contacts. This was a vocabulary some way removed from the passivity and caution of a year earlier; but it was only in metaphorical flights that violent action was ever proposed, or the vengeance of state power overlooked. The imagery of violence was more than counterbalanced by a recurrent emphasis on non-violent tactics, by an insistence that "we fight peacefully". Outgunned as African workers were, there was an objective need to maintain united and non-violent action at times of confrontation, and there was a realism about the state's monopoly of the instruments of violence: "the others has aeroplanes and guns". Unity was to be their weapon.

On January 12th 1930, Kadalie issued an ultimatum to harbour and rail employers. There could have been little expectation of a positive response, particularly within the 48 hours allowed by the IICU. On 15th January, buoyed with recollections of previous victories - particularly relevant was the strike by Cape Town dockers in 1919 - Kadalie called the black employees of the South African Railways and Harbours out on strike. The events of the strike, and its aftermath, are explored in section 4.

(ii) Africanism takes hold:

If the IICU's sudden rise in mass support at the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930 was largely due to the union's willingness to engage in militant action on wages, nevertheless the popularity had other ideological foundations as well. Its adoption, well before the stress on wages or talk of a strike, of a more radical Africanist position laid the groundwork for its mass appeal and its legitimation at grass roots level. The "new" Africanism grew out of but went well beyond the ambiguous anti-white strands of its discourse noted for 1928 and early 1929.

In the weeks following the ICU split, one of the ways in which the Independents could distinguish themselves from the old guard was to attack the latter's links with Ballinger. Ballinger was castigated, essentially, as a white man muscling in on an African organisation: and the attack on him rapidly became more generalised, giving a heightened place and a new edge to the anti-white and exclusivist/Africanist tones of the IICU. Kadalie set

the tone in his first address in the city after the formation of the IICU. He recounted the details of his row with Ballinger and mentioned that Ballinger had invited him onto the Joint Council in Johannesburg - "I refused as natives cannot join any union with Europeans." (14/4/29) Mnika and Magade followed suit at the very next meeting; they spoke for a new ICU which "is not going to be the same as the Old ICU. We are not going to be misled by a white man." The lines were firmly drawn. Lujiza and his colleagues were said to have "betrayed Kadalie and... handed him over to a white man" and Ballinger was "the enemy of our people". (21.4.29) Magade followed his self-depiction as a Russian agitator by averring: "We believe more in Kadalie than we shall ever believe in a white man." (21/4/29) A fortnight later, Barney Vandala's warning against white perfidy was interwoven with religious prophecies and a call to nation-building:

> I want to encourage you to build yourselves into a nation. Do not take any notice of what the anti ICU people tell you, they are your enemies. God has sent Kadalie to us to uplift the black people. The anti ICU people forgot what was said by God, that he will send a Captain from the north to deliver his relations from darkness in the South. I warn you not to listen to what the white people tell you, they will put you against Kadalie but do not listen to them. Kadalie ... is the man we have to listen to. Kadalie is working for the freedom of the black races, and we black people must help him. (5/5/29)

During the second half of 1929, suspicions of and hostility towards whites echoed constantly in IICU speeches, and this rhetoric remained a feature of IICU ideology throughout the period examined in this essay. Part of the heightened racial consciousness was undoubtedly a response to political developments in Pretoria and elsewhere. The 1929 "Black Peril" election, the threat posed to Africans by another Hertzog government, and violent police tactics in Durban were all part of the backdrop to events in East London. A number of other political movements amongst blacks at this time evinced similarly Africanist positions, ranging from the rural Wellington movement to the Garveyism of Thaele and other ANC leaders. In the IICU case the message of Africanism was elaborated, its content developed. The call for black self-sufficiency (already noted for the pre-1929 period) was extended. Mnika not only advised that blacks establish their own shops ("support the shops run by natives, have your boots repaired by native shoemakers") but also added "I would suggest to you not to deal at European shops". (30/6/29) Six months later, during the IICU strike, white shops were indeed boycotted. There was increased advocacy of action in separate spheres of operation: whites had their own nation and

their own union, it was argued, and blacks should build theirs. This could even lead to an acceptance of the philosophy behind segregation, while hotly disputing its terms: "There is one thing I like about General Hertzog", said Magade, "he wants the natives to one side and the Europeans on the other side, not to mix with one another", although in the same breath he attacked Hertzog for wanting Europeans to have "all the land". (23/6/29) Withdrawing from contact with whites implied closer links with other blacks: links with Garveyism, with American blacks, with the United Negro Improvement Association and with Coloureds and Indians in South Africa were all floated at various times. The struggle for independence in India became a frequence reference point and analogy.

IICU speakers in 1929 recalled dispossession at the hands of whites as a crucial element in national oppression, reinterpreting the history of conquest in a more radical way than hitherto. Reminders that "all the land of Africa belonged to our forefathers, it was taken from them" flowed easily into claims for the exclusive reoccupation of that land by blacks. Vividly, a speaker from Springs in the Transvaal drew a political lesson from his visit to the seaside city:

> When the white man came to our country we gave them everything, whereas we should rather have killed them or died in endeavouring to do so ... we have learnt enough now, it is time that we were left to govern ourselves. Look at the sea and you will see thousands of white girls bathing, but very few natives will be seen which goes to show that the whiteman belongs to the sea and they should be driven there. (6.1.30)

Ideas about nation-building now went beyond the concept of a <u>united</u> black nation and embraced that of a <u>liberated</u> black nation. The IICU's promise of building "a free black nation" became its quintessential slogan, while the phrase is not recorded in the speeches made before April 1929. When black unity was urged, it was frequently interpreted in sweeping and (in the South African context) politically challenging fashion. Black unity was extended beyond pan-tribalism to mean "all other non-European races". Africans were advised by Sigadu to stop asking God to save King George. They should "pray to God to save your native chiefs. Do as the Indians did, they lifted their own flag and elected their own king." (5/1/30) Whereas references to the rise of European civilisation had in 1928 usually been admiring, they were now derisive. "They say it took them 2000 years to reach their present state of civilisation", commented Maduna - "which is only what we can expect from such blockheads!" (8/1/30)

Another speaker, Mkwambi, thanked the whites for what they had taught; but added that Africans now had their own teachers. Kadalie and the IICU were consolidating a lesson of their own. They taught that whites were oppressors.

(iii) Independent Christianity

The scriptures remained a rich source of images of oppression and deliverance, but there are signs in 1929 of a marked switch in attitudes towards churches and religion. Some IICU leaders maintained a sceptical distance from churches of all kinds. But especially among new local leaders on IICU platforms the mounting Africanist rhetoric was accompanied by a new level of interest in and support for an African Christianity. This could in some instances lead to involvement in separatist churches. It is clear that the Independent ICU came increasingly to accept that it could not afford to alienate these churches, and there was an overlap of membership in independent sects and independent union.

The role of God as a higher authority from whom rights could be derived was emphasised, especially as there remained no other legitimate sources of authority. Explicitly, IICU leaders announced that they no longer looked to Britain for justice or retribution, and regretted African support for the Imperial war effort. "God", a local speaker averred, "is the only one who will release us from the bondage of the Europeans." The logic of this was followed through: "if we want to build ourselves into a free nation we must serve God", and "he will help us with our organisation." (28/4/29) Mnika added that he did not even mind being accused of holding "church services". The close proximity thus claimed of the deity and the IICU was personified in Kadalie. Kadalie had often been compared with biblical liberators (a "black Moses") and described as having been sent by God to East London; it seems however to have been his brother Robert who first declared that "Clements Kadalie is the son of Jesus Christ". (6.1.30)

God's agency on behalf of the IICU was necessarily mediated through churches - but not through all churches. The frequent references to religious legitimation as a basis for national liberation were linked to criticisms of white, mission churches and the call for a new black church. The cry "Do away with these

European ministers" (5/1/30) was one half of this message; the century-old tradition of Xhosa independent Christianity was the other. Ntsikana, especially, was adopted as the prophet of Xhosa religious separatism. His prophecies had been directly concerned with the arrival of Europeans and could now be used as rallying calls to black solidarity. "Our prophet Ntsikana told our forefathers not to follow the customs of the white man", remembered one speaker; while another elaborated:

> The prophet Ntsikana said under Ndoda mountain 'There is a nation who comes from overseas; they bring you a round button with no holes in it and a bible book. Don't accept the button [money] for as soon as you take it you will be scattered like a flock of sheep and lose your nation. You must take the bible for it bears all the teachings of God'. (22/6/30)

Kadalie was portrayed as the inheritor of Ntsikana's mantle (9/6/30) and he found it easy to turn religious imagery to immediate relevance. He was happy to accept the label "agitator" for himself; moreover, "Jesus Christ and Moses were agitators because they wanted people to do God's will". ( ) The rhetoric of separatist Christianity reached its zenith during January 1930: "There would be a new reformation, a new god, and new religion. 1930 was going to be the black man's Reformation." (6.1.30)

During the first phase of the strike, in January 1930 (see section 3 below) when mass meetings were being held almost daily, the tide of separatist religious imagery ebbed sharply. But it was soon to flow strongly again. The links established with independent churches now found organisational form. When Kadalie and his strike committee were arrested at the end of January, the leadership of meetings fell largely on the shoulders of one Reverend Nonkonyane, minister of an independent church. His ambiguous role in the division between the original strike committee and the more militant rank and file committee is detailed in section 3.

After the strike, through 1930 and beyond, this attachment to Christian separatism remained a constant theme of IICU rhetoric, indissolubly bound up with the language of black nationalism. Speakers repeatedly legitimised African claims to land as derived from an African God; the new African native was blessed by the same deity; an African God (and a black Jesus) were associated with the national struggle; and black political leaders were identified with biblical

liberators. As a white policeman summed it up, "The leaders are trying to show the natives that although they have not got the means or implements of warfare like the Europeans, yet with the help of God they can master them." (29.6.30) It was therefore necessary to have separate and direct access to God: "There are twelve gates and twelve telephones in Heaven", insisted a speaker, "and the Natives have their own gates and telephones." (24/11/29) This need carried an organisational logic: it pushed the IICU into closer co-operation with independent African churches.

Moreover, the links with separatist churches provided a recruiting device for the IICU, notably of women members, who were correctly regarded as providing the bulk of independent church congregations. The IICU leadership was generally content to work with independent ministers who were actually drafted onto the IICU committee; but there was also some talk of founding their own IICU church. The earliest references to this project, by Kadalie, were in extremely instrumental terms. Concerned that the state might outlaw the IICU as a political and trade union movement, Kadalie suggested that he might reconstitute it as a church, which would be less vulnerable. But this tactical formulation was superseded by an altogether more evangelical project. The reality of popular backing for the separatist church movement, the experience of politicised prayer meetings, and the withdrawal by the end of 1930 of some African ministers from their earlier close associations with the IICU all pointed in a similar direction. Mnika, in particular, started towards the end of 1930 to resuscitate the idea of an IICU church. He called on ministers and teachers to join the trade union to form "our own IICU churches and schools". (28.9.30) Trade unionism and the independent church could be fused: "I don't mean that you should not go to churches. I mean that we should form our own church, and all of us must carry the [IICU] yellow tickets." (31.10.30) No formal establishment of an IICU church appears to have taken place, although the well-attended prayer meetings held under IICU auspices might be viewed as a partial achievement of that end. The parallels between rural separatist ideology discussed in previous chapters and this politicised religious separatism in an urban township are substantial.

(4) STRIKE AND AFTERMATH - JANUARY - JUNE 1930

The 1930 strike mounted by the IICU in East London has been dismissively described by Wickins: it

> can only be regarded as a failure. Though perhaps for a day or two as much as eighty per cent of the Black labour force of the city stayed away from work ...

> the stoppage was short-lived and partial .... [The strike] had been ill-conceived and hastily executed without preparation. (16)

In common with other accounts of the strike, Wickins assumed that the strike effectively came to an end with the arrest of Kadalie and the strike committee eleven days after it began; that when (January 28th) Kadalie "sent orders to the strikers to return to work ... they did so". (17) This fails to recognise some of the most interesting features of the strike: in particular, the breach between the strike committee leadership and the rank and file; the prolongation of their stoppage by some strikers for six months; the social composition of the strikers; and the significance of the support forthcoming from women domestic servants. (This last point was noted by Monica Hunter. (18)) Wickins' description of the strike is certainly at variance with one penned by the magistrate of East London in his confidential report to the Holloway (Native Economic) Commission in 1931: he spoke of a strike "which lasted nearly six months and involved some thousands of natives" and which saw "a large number of men and women out of work and penniless". (19)

The strike began on January 16th, with the expiry of the ultimatum to the SARH. The action was launched amidst a flurry of mass meetings and with a welter of rhetoric. Some of this - understandably - was confused and self-contradictory; asservations of radicalism and accents of fervour ("If you are prepared to die sing 'Onward Christian Soldiers'") were common, although they sat oddly alongside injunctions to caution and orderliness. These latter predominated in the language and tactics of the leaders. There was a pronounced emphasis on discipline and obedience to the leadership in speeches made at the strike's outset. Kadalie

> told them that he was going to be General. I have made many strikes in this country, we have got to be orderly, not to walk about the streets, you must stay in the locations ... I want to make it clear to you that we are not going to fight with sticks, the others has aeroplanes and guns. (12.1.30)

A few days later he returned to the theme:

> We are the leaders, we are your Generals ... We are going to form our own little Government, employ our own police to do the picketing ... There will be no drink because we cannot control you when you are drunk. (13.1.30)

Peter Mkwanbi urged his listeners "to remember that the strike organisation is like a train, it only has one head and I want you to listen to the Strike

Committee, remember we are fighting with our brains and not sticks." (15.1.30) The "Rules for Strikers" issued by the Strike Committee (which consisted of Kadalie, Mnika, Magade, Tyamzashe, Maduna, Mkwambi and Mqayi) began with prohibitions against the carrying of sticks or "indulging in intoxicating liquors". They also called on strikers to attend mass meetings, to contribute 2/6d per head to a strike fund, and to other workers to "stand by in case they are called upon for sympathetic action".

Sympathetic action was not long in coming. The stoppage by dock and railway workers obviously excited a great deal of solidarity in the townships; two, three, and four thousand people were attending the meetings in support of the action. At the same time, the strike was vulnerable to the replacement of workers on strike by unemployed men desperate for windfall wages; while the shortage of funds and food for strikers also served to push the pace of the organisers towards more militant action. This forced the tactics of the Strike Committee down two particular paths. First, it made picketing - which took the form of trying to "seal up" the locations, so as to prevent men from leaving in search of work - a high tactical priority; and secondly, it led to the broadening out of the strike into a general stoppage, calling on all black workers in East London to come out. By the third day of the strike Kadalie announced that the Committee had decided "to lay the position before the women of the location": in doing so, he was enlisting the support of a group of workers who were to prove among the most determined of the strikers. On the following day, a general strike was announced. Four days into the general strike, a crowd of 4000 assembled, including a "commando" of about a thousand men, described by the police as "marching in sections of fours". The leaders made a series of militant speeches; Kadalie in particular using strong language and a tone of generalised aggression:

> In plain language, if they want to fight this bloody government must tell us. Let them tell us a certain date and we will fight them on that date .... It is only a question for me to light the match and you will see the whole country ablaze ... How I feel about these Forces in the location is that if I was in Nyasaland I would have murdered some of these white buggers. If I had the Askaris with me they would never come into the location ... Talk about law and order; I say damn law and order. (22/1/30)

The next day was a Sunday. Kadalie and the entire Strike Committee were invited to a private negotiating session with Major Lister, District Commandant of the South African Police. Upon arrival in his office, they were surrounded by armed policemen, arrested, and charged on the morning of the next day with incitement to public violence. On January 28th Kadalie and his colleagues made a court appearance, and a letter from them was read to the large crowd gathered outside. It said that the Strike Committee had decided that the stoppage must be called off, and that all workers must return to their posts: "You must go back to work immediately and earn money to subscribe to our defence." The Daily Dispatch reporter noted that this message was not well received by many in the crowd of 3,500.(20) On the next day Alex Fifana and John Mciza wrote on behalf of a "Rank and File Committee" refusing Kadalie's advice: "We shall not return to work until our employers comply with our demands."

This breach between the original Strike Committee and the more militant rank and file committee persisted in the months that followed. Unfortunately, little evidence is available for this phase of the strike - there is a frustrating break in the sequence of police reports - but what does exist may be summarised. In the absence of Kadalie, Mnika, Magade, and the rest of the Strike Commitee, the mass meetings took on a different tone and shape. Very large crowds attended; passions were easily aroused; but the diction was transformed. Instead of the organisers' calls for discipline or Kadalie's braggadoccio, the main message now came from Rev. Nonkonyane. This message was deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, his speeches seemed designed to maintain mobilisation. In his report of the meetings of 1st and 2nd February, Det.-Sgt. Mandy had called them "purely religious gatherings", but on 4th February he made this comment:

> The meeting was conducted on purely religious lines, the speakers reading and quoting relative [sic] passages from the bible .... Some of these passages though couched in biblical terms and quotations have practically the same meaning as conveyed by the inflammatory speeches of Kadalie and his strike committee. These passages have a double meaning. There appears to be an undercurrent going on amongst the natives which is being kept a secret.

On the other hand, Nonkonyane attempted to defuse the tensions created by rank and file efforts to continue the strike and to attack scabbing workers. He told Mandy that "these people are getting out of control. I have been holding the reins tightly long enough", and warned that unless Kadalie were released "I won't be able to control them any longer." (10.2.30) On two

resented. Once the strike began, more stringent application of the regulations governing these permits was one of the tactics favoured by the municipality and the police, and there were explicit warnings that "any contraventions would be dealt with and the existing laws enforced". (13/2/30)

This led to ever more desperate attempts to gain the permits by unemployed inhabitants. A municipal officer described the pressures being imposed on the clerks issuing the location permits:

> The native clerks pointed out that it was difficult to sort out the bona fide applicants because all the loafers, hooligans, kaffir beer traders, etc., had joined the ranks of the strikers, and the strikers claimed equal treatment for them. (21)

On 21st February, ten men and two women were arrested, charged with living in the Location without permits, and fined 10/- each: unable to pay their fines, they were sentenced to gaol instead. All twelve of those arrested were apparently workers on strike, and the popular protest that ensued sought to establish their identity as striking workers and therefore as legitimate township inhabitants. A crowd of about 3000 Africans assembled just before midday outside the East London magistrate's court. A delegation representing the crowd said that they were demonstrating on behalf of the arrested strikers and that "if the strikers were to be arrested [they would] give themselves up in a body." They then successfully negotiated the release of the twelve, upon payment of the fines by popular collection. The episode prompted fears amongst the authorities that the (original) Strike Committee "did not appear to have sufficient hold over the rank and file and the unruly element might get the upper hand." There was, in the Location that night an air of excitement: "a section of the strikers jubilating, stating that the discharge of the prisoners was a victory for strikers". (Police report, 23.2.30)

It is impossible to establish in any detail the composition of the crowds who supported the Rank and File committee, who marched on the courthouse, and who - in dwindling numbers - remained on strike until mid-1930. (Most of the strikers - those who could find re-employment - straggled back to work by May; the last reference to "bitter-enders" is on June 16th.) There are a number of indications that they included many women, and that they attracted a high proportion of casual labourers, marginally employed and lumpen elements. Police

said that there were numbers of "habitual unemployed and kwedines" at meetings in February. These meetings were not as highly organised as the regular weekly IICU occasions; as a report of 27 February put it:

> There appears to be a more or less continuous gathering of natives on the football ground, and it is stated that the atmosphere is cloudy with impending trouble. Scrub women and casual labourers, at work during the day, join the gathering in the evenings and appear to support the non-workers.22

Not only washerwomen, but other female workers too, played an important part in sustaining the strike after it had been called off by Kadalie. This theme is developed in the next section.

After preliminary hearings in East London, Kadalie and the eight members of the Strike Committee were taken for trial to Grahamstown: according to Kadalie in later years because "the authorities at East London did not trust the local Africans, as they might make an attempt to rescue us from gaol by force." (23) The trial at the Supreme Court in Grahamstown lasted a month and concluded with "Not Guilty" verdicts on each of 115 charges and a conviction (with £25 fine) on one count for Kadalie. On 24th May, Kadalie and his co-accused returned triumphantly to East London and held a meeting of about 1500 men and women. "My oratory ... was in jubilant vein", Kadalie subsequently recalled - and much of it consisted in denunciation of Detective-Sergeant Mandy and his commanding officer, Captain Lloyd-Lister. (24) Despite a noisy welcome, Kadalie and the strike committee did not return to an uncomplicated approval by the location inhabitants. Kadalie's advice to the strikers to return to work had not been a popular one, and the success of the Rank and File committee in mobilising support and sustaining strike action for several months meant that the original leadership was going to have to compete with a new layer of activists for the support of the workers. Even after Kadalie reported - to a crowd of between 4000 and 5000 people - that he had "already been sitting in conference with the Rank and File committee and we are engaged with the points in dispute", Mandy's opinion was that for the "hot heads" it was "no compensation for them to now be told by Kadalie to go back to work" and he believed that the Rank and File committee would "not receive Kadalie's suggestion too favourably should he announce his intention of abandoning the strike." By May 29th, Kadalie announced that "the small differences between you which were bound to occur when your leaders were in gaol" had that day "been happily settled".

The happy settlement was not complete: rancour against the original Strike Committee bubbled over at the end of the very meeting at which Kadalie announced the restoration of amity ("At this juncture the women folk jumped up as in one body and all commenced to shout at the top of their voices, from what I could gather [wrote Mandy] they were protesting against Madade ...") and was to resurface again and again in the months that followed. Nevertheless, the leadership was able to reassert its authority. But in order to lead, they had to learn to follow: they had to change their tactics and embrace new issues. Defeated in their struggle to improve conditions at the workplace, they found themselves having to be much more vitally concerned with issues of the dwelling-place; the arena of conflict had been pushed into the township. In the same way that new issues and interests were reflected in the rhetoric and ideology of the IICU after its formation, the speeches of the IICU leaders from mid-1930 graphically reflected the new context in which the union organisers found themselves.

(5) MAY 1930 - 1932: THE IICU AS THE VOICE OF THE TOWNSHIP

One of the grievances that came to occupy a central position in the IICU discourse was that of beer brewing. This was pre-eminently a women's interest, and demonstrates the extent to which women were not shaping popular mass action in the townships. A second major change was a rediscovery by the East London IICU of the countryside. The 1930 strike pushed organisers into rural areas in search of support and resources; there they became caught up in a range of popular rural movements. This section of the paper examines both these aspects of political pressures "from below", and argues that these issues were incorporated into IICU thinking and rhetoric as they tried to represent and to lead a popular movement far broader than they had headed in East London prior to the strike.

i) Women as wives, workers, and brewers:

Throughout the years covered in this essay, women remained peripheral to the IICU organisation itself; there were no women on the union staff, no regular women speakers at the mass meetings, no women on the strike committee (or on the rank and file strike committee). Nevertheless, as the previous section has indicated, during the first half of 1930 issues affecting women were placed on the IICU agenda. The Union leaders tended to associate certain

issues with women and to assign particular roles to women. The roles singled out, and the issues attached to them, may be summarised as follows:

(i) Women as wives: in which role they might be called on to back their men-folk or even to serve as "domestic pickets"; they also carried out certain tasks regarded as women's work - such as tea-making, organising social functions, making IICU badges, etc.

(ii) Women as workers: in which role they were for the most part already in gender-defined jobs (domestic service, cleaning, laundry work).

(iii) Women as brewers: women engaged in a range of "informal sector" activities (hawking goods, repairing clothes, baking bread without a licence, etc.) of which the most important was the brewing of beer to supplement family income, or even as the main means of income for some women.

(iv) Women as landladies: There was very little municipal housing in the Locations at this period, and about 90 per cent of all dwellings were privately owned. Many women lived by taking in lodgers (either in houses which they owned, or more commonly in buildings which they rented and then sub-let).

When the strike began in January 1930, Kadalie was swift to appreciate the contribution that women might make, initially in their capacity as wives. He appealed to women to use their domestic power in helping to secure support for the strike, urging them "to be the pickets in their own homes ... [to] stop their husbands and their sweethearts from going to work. Should he be a coward and go to work you must refuse to cook food." (18.1.30) Women were also called on to provide support for striking male workers in the preparation of food for them and their families, and Kadalie also asked them to be generous ("show the African spirit") to lodgers who could not afford to pay rent while the strike was on. The extent to which, during the first days of the strike, women were viewed essentially as wives is evidenced by the ban imposed by union organisers on women receiving the food rations distributed to strikers. (The rationale for this move was the leaders' belief that rations might be taken by women whose husbands were still at work.)

If it was as wives that they were perceived, it was as workers that the women intervened most forcefully to shape the direction and content of the strike. Their militancy was made patent early in the course of the action. The first extension of the rail and dock workers stoppage into what became

a general strike was through the mobilisation of women workers, mainly domestic servants. At a meeting "attended by several thousand women" (according to the Daily Dispatch, 20/1/30), it was decided that servants would refuse to work after the weekend. It was at a further meeting on the same day that the strike was redefined as a general strike. Two days later a strike leader commented that "The girls have been more loyal to our cause than the men", and he cited admiringly the instance of a woman who had climbed through a window to join the strike after the doors were locked to prevent her leaving (22/1/30) and there was also a commendation for the six women who "went to Dean's Hotel and pulled the women out of work there." (24/1/30) A month later a cook (named in the newspaper report only as Lizzie) was fined £1 or 14 days for "intimidating other girls from entering [her employer's] employment": defiantly, she informed the magistrate that the strike was not over as far as women servants were concerned and that a large number were still refusing to work. (25)

This mobilisation of women as workers is a distinctive feature of the East London strike. Most of them worked in highly individualised capacities, as domestic servants, as laundry women, cleaners, and unskilled assistants in hotels, shops and offices. They were at the bottom of the wages ladder. In the months preceding the strike, little had been done to incorporate them into the mass movement, and the leadership does not appear to have taken up their case in any of its approaches to employers or Wages Board. But by the second week of the strike, women's wage demands were being articulated as a specific plank in the IICU platform. The call was for domestic workers to receive a minimum wage of £3 (or about double what they were receiving at the time) - and "washerwomen 5/- per washing from one to twelve articles, twelve and over to be paid for proportionately". This demand became coupled to that of 6/6d per day for male workers as a long term union objective. There was specific recognition that labour done by women for wages entailed hard and unattractive work: "a washerwoman has a lot of dirty washing, some clothes full of excreta, and that dirty work only for two shillings a day."(9.6.30) This strongly suggests that women's demands - whether through their separate IICU committee, through their numerous presence at mass meetings, or through other associated activities, such as the church and prayer meetings held under IICU auspices - were successfully pressed from below into the discourse of the IICU.

After the first fortnight of intensive strike action, and after Kadalie's arrest and his call for a return to work, women workers gained a new prominence. Throughout the period February-May 1930, when rank and file workers attempted to prolong the strike, women were doubly engaged in this rearguard action. Not only were a number of those who disobeyed the injunction to return to work women workers, but women were also conspicuous by their presence at meetings. Whether individual women returned to work or not, the strike had the effect of increasingly financial and social pressures on location women as a group. The strike - in its initial form as well as in the rearguard action - threw additional people out of work, and increased the strain on domestic budgets. It was women who had to confront most immediately the problems of reduced income and food supply. (Actual hunger played a real part in the progress of the strike. A great deal of energy went into attempts to secure gifts of oxen and other foodstuffs from rural supporters; women at prayer meetings prayed for food; and by mid-February Mandy reported that "A certain section of the crowd appeared to be feeling the pinch of hunger which is causing them to be wavering towards returning to work" (16/2/30).) And it also fell to women to seek for extra income through activities in the township economy. Perhaps the most important single source of earnings in the informal sector was the brewing and sale of beer; and this became a crucial issue for the IICU in 1930.

It was not the case that all women workers were also brewers, nor did all those who stayed out on strike turn personally to brewing, for it was to some extent a specialist activity. However, quite large numbers of women in East London did brew (in 1930/31 alone there were 1,992 prosecutions for illegal brewing) and as the strike action persisted between February and May the recourse to brewing for income seems to have increased. In addition, one of the ways in which the state could retaliate against the strike (other than imprisoning the leaders and supporting employers who fired strikers) was to tighten its controls over the townships. Indeed, in February 1930 the police specifically warned that they would take stern action against beer brewing, possession of liquor, and failure to hold lodgers' permits. The heightened dependence on informal sector activities, coupled with added police pressure in the townships, had the effect of making the Locations the central arena of class conflict.

During the 1920s the East London town council remained officially wedded to the outright prohibition of beer-brewing in the African locations. They had not, that is, adopted either the "Durban model" (of outlawing domestic brewing but

selling beer in profitable municipal beerhalls) or the "Bloemfontein model" (of allowing limited brewing for domestic consumption but not for sale). Despite the ban, beer brewing was regularly undertaken in East London in the face of intermittent raids and prosecutions. Some of the beer was consumed by those who brewed it; most was sold at three-halfpence per pint or 3/6d for full (4 gallons) paraffin tin. Although there were nearly 2000 prosecutions for brewing in 1930-31, an official commented that "the trade proceeds merrily".(26) Missionaries pressed for temperance; employers grumbled about absenteeism; but some municipal officers recognised the nutritional quality of the beverage and sought merely to control its traffic. The wealthier educated elite, represented by those Africans on the Advisory Board, strongly favoured the legalisation of domestic brewing. They opposed beer halls (eventually opened in East London in 1938) as being both socially ruinous and financially unfair; they regarded beer drinks, and their attendant formalities, as quite unlike the intemperate and violent gatherings sketched by disapproving whites. For the mass of location dwellers, the issue was even more clear-cut. They were jealous of their right to drink beer, which they valued not only as a means of relaxation but also as an expression of social solidarity; and they also sought to establish the right to protect their own living quarters from constant invasion by police. The interests of the women who brewed the beer were direct and central. They depended on the income from brewing to supplement low wages; they suffered from the arrests and prosecutions; and the techniques used by the police constantly dramatised their lack of power and status.

Before the formation of the Independent ICU in April 1929, ICU leaders in East London were conspicuously reluctant to support these popular interests. Instead, they opposed the location beer culture, arguing that beer drinking detracted from potential support and income for the trade union. Similar attitudes peppered the IICU speeches during 1929, although as more attention was directed to popular grievances the first stray indications emerged of IICU awareness that the brewing ban (and other location issues) were important. On 19 May 1929, a dramatic IICU meeting was held which began with a procession through the East Bank Location behind a new banner (emblazoned with the slogan Vuka Africa Kusike - Wake Up, Africa, It is the Dawn). On the reassembly, Mnika promised that the Union was "going to do a great deal of work for the oppressed" and continued:

> every day natives are being arrested and sent to gaol for selling Kaffir Beer and for not carrying passes. The IICU is going to abolish this pass business, why should you be chased by the policemen every day and night, it causes much unhappiness ...

A week later, Keable Mote (in a speech already mentioned - see p. told his audience that he had written to Location Superintendent Lloyd "asking his permission for every native man to make one tin of Kaffir Beer for his own use" as well as for the abolition of the system of lodgers' permits, another location grievance. "I say you should be allowed to brew Kaffir Beer" (Mote maintained)"at your huts the same as they are allowed in Bloemfontein and at Port Elizabeth." (26.5.29)

Even so, the adoption of location brewing as an item in the IICU programme provides a revealing study of how tentatively, even awkwardly, the leadership reached at first for a handhold on this popular issue. When the strike was launched, the Strike Committee urged workers to abstain from drinking (so as to maintain discipline, and to deprive police of an excuse for intervention). Nor was the strike projected as a means to win the right to brew, but rather as a way of making brewing financially unnecessary:

> Should we get the 6/6 it would be a means of preventing you women from brewing Kaffir Beer. I know you only do this to help your husbands to make ends meet. You know the dangers of bringing brandy or brewing kaffir beer in the locations. You do it, not for pleasure, you only do it to raise money to assist in paying taxes ... (18/1/30)

This was essentially in line with the previous ICU position, and a far cry from the values of those men - many recently arrived from rural areas - who wanted to drink beer and to involve themselves in the cultural and social activities associated with it. It was equally distant from the interests of the women who depended on brewing for survival.

By May 1930, however, when the issues surrounding beer had become more urgent to the township inhabitants the IICU could no longer afford to ignore the question. Kadalie and the other leaders, returned from their trial, were trying to re-establish their authority and popularity, and one of the ways in which they did so was to champion certain township issues. Kadalie, addressing

huge meetings at the end of May reiterated his earlier argument that IICU success would render brewing unnecessary. This was small consolation for women dependent on brewing and facing frequent police raids. Kadalie also had advice for his audience on their relations with the police; township people should "refrain from interfering with the police, don't pass remarks against them, leave the attacking of them to us leaders, we know how far to go". This clearly failed to satisfy the crowd (estimated at between eight and ten thousand people). Kadalie was asked from the floor "If the police come to interfere with us in our homes, such as to break our doors open in search of Kaffir Beer, what are we to do?" Kadalie's reply ("Submit to arrest, don't interfere with them, we know how to deal with them, we will sue the buggers") may well have contributed to the inattentive behaviour of the crowd at this meeting.

There were certainly a number of references in May and June to restlessness in the crowds at IICU meetings. On May 29th, a meeting of 2000 people almost ended in confusion when women in the crowd denounced Magade. (He had apparently tried to turn away women holding a prayer meeting on the football ground, venue of the IICU rally, where the women were offering prayers in support of the rank and file committee members under arrest.) A questioner again demanded of the leaders some protection against police action:

> You called the strike off when you were arrested, we listened and went back to work, rather we went looking for work. Some of us couldn't find employment. The position now is this: that we are being chased by the Dutchmen (policemen) for lodgers' permits ...

Maduna attempted to soothe the meeting by calling on people with complaints to bring them to the IICU office and not to air them in public. Within a few days, however, Maduna and the other leaders redefined their position so as to accommodate some of these popular grievances. Maduna announced that the IICU would write to the Minister of Justice complaining about police conduct in East London - explicitly, about their "continually breaking into the native houses in search of Kaffir Beer". He also promised action on "the carrying of lodgers' permits". (1/6/30) A few days later Mnika and others undertook to meet the Location Superintendent and the Advisory Board "to protest against the actions of the Police", assuring the women that they "had the liquor question in hand" and inviting all with grievances to join the union so that their cases could be dealt with individually.

In June 1930, for the first time the whole question of domestic brewing became a central aspect of the IICU approach. Mnika called for "the same laws ... as in Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and Kroonstad permitting every householder to make four gallons of beer". Indeed, he went further than this in supporting the right to brew: in the other cities, he reminded his audience, people "of course" brewed more beer than the official limit - "I leave that to you how it is done." He praised the women present for the effectiveness of their prayers while their leaders had been under arrest, and attacked the Advisory Board whose members (he asserted) gave the police "the right to enter your houses in search of Kaffir Beer". At the same meeting, Maduna specifically invited "Kaffir beer brewers" to join the Independent ICU so that the union could take appropriate action on their behalf against the police. (8/6/30) The next meeting ended in further assurances that the IICU would defeat the government over brewing, and "the people ... disappeared in cheers".

Attendance at IICU meetings climbed steeply again (see fig 2) when the leadership adopted these demands. Most prominently during June, and to a lesser extent throughout the rest of 1930, the mobilisation around location grievances helped sustain support for the IICU in the aftermath of the unsuccessful strike. Individual cases of invasion of privacy by police were pursued; organisers attacked the anomaly that permitted some blacks (registered voters) to buy liquor but withheld the right from the majority; and they mounted a sweeping denunciation of police methods. Police were accused of planting evidence in order to secure convictions, of using excsssive violence, of carrying out raids in the small hours of the morning, and generally of displays of racial animosity. "The police are after people", summed up Magade:

> They look for beer, trouble you in your sleep, and worry you day and night. Why don't you sue them? The Sergeant himself with his dirty stripes has no right to carry a lot of keys and open doors in your absence. Say perhaps he has a bottle of brandy in his own pocket, ... is he not going to lay a charge against you ... for what he himself brought into your house? (9/6/30)

An aspect of the police raids which clearly caused a great deal of anger was the way they dealt with any beer they discovered, tipping it out of its containers wherever they found it. In the early months of 1931 this became an almost constant motif of IICU rhetoric. Another approach to the whole question pursued

vigorously in 1931 was the suggestion that the wrong people were being punished for brewing. German and Jewish traders were free to visit the location and sell imitombo (sprouted sorghum, used mainly for brewing) without fear of prosecution, while the women who processed the imitombo were harried and fined.

(ii) The IICU and rural areas.

The final and perhaps most significant instance of ideological realignment within the IICU is the increasing involvement of the union in rural mobilisation during 1930 and 1931. This was not merely a matter of tactical support for specific rural campaigns; it also saw populist rural consciousness penetrate the urban movement, as several aspects of rural ideology filtered through into the speeches and politicking of the IICU organisers. These developments served to shift the stance of the movement more broadly: that the separatist tendencies in the IICU ideology were confirmed; that its radical independent religious message intensified; and that the leadership found itself being pushed into a novel and distinctive local and traditional idiom. In many ways, the existing Africanism of the movement enabled these new features to be incorporated, and in a sense this was a direct outcome of the movement's search for rural allies. But the prominence of the folk ideology and its millenialist overtones indicate a partial capture of the movement by its new rural constituencies. This capture, and the ideological pressures it generated, were increasingly to be resisted by the urban leadership, and ultimately led to the disintegration of the urban/rural alliance briefly established.

There was of course a considerable legacy from the days of the parent ICU of embroilment in rural conflict. The ICU had been enlisted in the fierce local struggles waged by farm labourers and tenants in the mid-twenties. The East London branch of the ICU had made some forays into the Transkei and Ciskei before 1929: Theo Lujiza was the organiser with special responsibility for rural mobilisation. In Kentani (which district was a major provider of Gcaleka labourers in East London) Lujiza claimed a "big membership" by 1927. There were also branches opened in Bizana and Ngqeleni (in Mpondoland) in 1928 and 1929 - although not with conspicuous success. The ICU was able to win the co-operation of some rural chiefs and headmen before 1929, and these links were later to be strengthened by the Independent ICU. The IICU organisers who duplicated Lujiza's efforts in rural areas were Elias Mabodla and Joel Magade. Himself from Tabankulu in

Mpondoland, Magade had retained strong rural links (he referred to Tabankulu as "home") and he was one of the main channels through which rural concerns and language flowed into the IICU.

In the first months of its existence, the IICU expanded its involvement in rural areas. This seems to have occurred in large measure because of approaches from country districts - sometimes from people who already had links with the union and sometimes from men who sought such a relationship. Indeed, if one feature of the period April-December 1929 was the interest expressed in the IICU by several Ciskeian and Transkeian chiefs, another was the increasingly cordial response to them by IICU speakers. Chief Mqcwezulu of Kingwilliamstown, grandson of Mtirara, explained that he had travelled to East London "to meet the committee to request them to send a man amongst my people to organise them .... I like this Independent ICU because it unites our people." (16/6/29) In terms of recruitment, Kentani was the most responsive district; Mabodla and Magade, assisted by the local man Dorrington Mqayi, signed up sizeable numbers of members. (14/10/29, 3/11/29, 17/11/29)

The rural communities showing the keenest interest in the IICU were among the more traditionalist country areas, particularly in Kingwilliamstown district and amidst Gcaleka groups in Kentani. These communities had not been very receptive to the modernising political initiatives led by mission-educated "new men" at the turn of the century. Now, as in several other rural movements described in this book, they were more strongly attracted by the radical and Africanist tones of a different group of educated leaders. The changing ideology of the IICU - its emphatic Africanism and its radical rhetoric - served as a bridge between the urban-based leadership and the new rural constituency. The IICU leaders, in a number of respects, resembled the populist activists in Qumbu, Idutywa, Mount Fletcher or Herschel. Although educated, they had broken away from the missions and white liberals; although coming from petty bourgeoise occupations they were pushing beyond the programme of self-improvement, the patient pursuit of reform, and the concern to establish special treatment for an educated and "civilised" elite. These departures were what enabled them to broaden their appeal and to mobilise rural communities hitherto little swayed by petty bourgeoise political appeals. The difference between the populism of the IICU leaders and the local mission-bound modernising elite was illustrated on a number of occasions. In Bizana, for instance, the

IICU meetings were disrupted by "the educated natives of the village and district"; the supporters "mainly consisted of women and a few of the raw natives". (27) In Kentani, the local Vigilance Association attacked the IICU in these terms:

> Their propaganda is not conducive to proper relations and cooperation with the government, and is inclined to divide the ignorant masses from the more intelligent, law-abiding classes, thus removing those safeguards which have been set up by a community which seeks to represent their grievances in a constitutional way for the protection of law, order and constituted authority. (27)

Nor was the ideological transmission in one direction only: at the same time that the union's message began to be heard with more interest in rural communities, the language and symbolism of pre-colonial Xhosa heroism bulked larger in IICU speeches. The references to the Xhosa past now went beyond Ntsikana, representative of independent Xhosa Christianity, and included Hintsa and other representatives of a Xhosa/Gcaleka tradition of resistance. Hintsa, the last independent Gcaleka chief, tricked and killed during the war of 1835, served as a potent rallying point both in the circumstances of his death and as a warrior. Hintsa had been "shot in cold blood", Tyamzashe reminded his hearers - "my heart is sore, I want you all to be sore about that." Or, as another speaker encouraged the crowd, "the bone of Hintsa will get up again and help us". (6.1.30)

References to a specifically Xhosa tradition would have appealed to migrant workers in East London audiences; but they were also one of the ways in which the IICU leadership sought to confirm or strengthen their alliance with Xhosa chiefs. During the strike of 1930, the IICU attempted to capitalise on those links with chiefs already established. For one thing, they looked to chiefs for gifts of grain and cattle with which to feed the strikers; secondly, through the chiefs the union could try to prevent the recruitment of rural scab labour; and thirdly, it was important for the IICU leadership to demonstrate to striking workers the reality of external support. In the same way that Kadalie read telegrams of encouragement from overseas and elsewhere in South Africa, he also looked to the chiefs for expressions of rural solidarity. On the first day of the strike, Kadalie promised that "the Native chiefs tbroughout the country have no time for the Government: they correspond with me privately; we are going to get cattle from these chiefs to feed you." This was echoed by Gcaleka chief Pakamela from Kentani when he

travelled to East London to tell a large crowd: "You will see that Hertzog can no more depend too much on the loyalty of the Native chiefs." (21/1/30)

During the strike, visiting chiefs made a number of forceful speeches in favour of the urban action, emphasising the national and land questions. The "rightful owners of this land were the red natives", said Pakamela and Sigidi attended a meeting of 3000 people on 25th January 1930, at which the latter spoke in this vein:

> I thank you that so many of you are in the likeness of your fathers who were killed by the whiteman. I say you must be prepared to die in this field in the same way as your fathers did ... We have no intention of killing one who belongs to our own race. Those who go to work we are going to kill. Those who declare themselves Europeans, leave, get out.

Sigidi fused Xhosa identity and strike action; this powerful message of mobilisation was one which the chiefs were uniquely in a position to deliver. (Equally, it was probably a great help to Nonkonyane that Sigidi - who "had great sway with the local natives" - remained in East London and sided with the clergyman in restraining the anger of the rank and file die-hards.)

The months of strike action witnessed a surge of support for the IICU in Transkei districts where the union already had a footing. At one point Magade claimed over 5000 members in Kentani and 4000 in Idutywa: these figures may be of dubious accuracy, but IICU meetings in these districts were certainly able to draw large crowds and evoked a real enthusiasm (Those meetings were partly aimed at drumming up rural subscriptions or collections in aid of the arrested strike committee (in Kentani, the appeals were made in the name of the local man, Mqayi) but the occasions could also be directed to purely rural grievances. Mabodla, addressing a meeting in Kentani in March 1930, was asked "if we are united, will the police still prosecute us for noxious weeds?" - and he answered that solidarity would defeat the police: "they cannot put the whole district in gaol." (29) Other rural issues - the reporting of cattle deaths, taxation, and the economic power of white traders ("these white traders never go to the mines to work for money, neither do they plough") - became part of the union's concerns in Kentani. The effects of labour migrancy were especially deplored: "Look at those native women, they are widows; their husbands are at work in the mines." (30)

In the second half of 1930, the IICU effort in Kentani was badly damaged by financial scandals and feuding within the leadership there. During these

same months, the union was also making a concerted push into what were called the "outside locations" of East London: areas of black tenancy or land-ownership at Nahoon, Newlands, and Mooiplaats. The IICU seems to have been responding to the needs of communities already seething with discontent and impatient with the meagre channels open to them for redress. At Nahoon, long-standing grievances over dog-taxes, dipping-taxes, and poll-tax were caught up into IICU speeches; in all these rural meeting places, the speakers endorsed popular demands for more land. When Mnika visited Mooiplaats, he placed himself firmly in the lineage of rural legitimacy: "I am Mnika, Mwari isibongi; [his traditional praise name]. I belong to Hintsa's family." (3.9.30)

It was not merely that support for rural grievances was a way of attracting rural members. The IICU leaders were also clearly aware that these issues were of relevance and importance to their urban audiences. Full, detailed accounts were relayed to East London meetings of IICU agitation in the Ciskeian and Transkeian hinterland. The union mounted campaigns in defence of land-holders who complained of being cheated out of their farms; sought redress over wages for farm workers; and addressed a range of rural topics including bans on beer drinks and traditional dances, the need for African-owned shops to buy peasant produce, the evils of mine recruiting, and so on. Many IICU members in East London itself were affected by just these matters, either directly or through their families. The IICU rhetoric specifically included rural people in the concept of a black nation, and also singled out the category of rural women for particular mention. "In outside locations" (reported Siyo) "where we went to address some meetings, red native females dragged their blankets to meet us .... the red native women joined and took IICU tickets." (24.8.30)

In the same way that popular township consciousness forced its way into the discourse of the IICU leadership, in 1930 the work in the rural areas altered the content and scope of the union's rhetoric. Explanations and prescriptions were modified by elements of rural, traditionalist ideology. In particular, there was an infusion of popular rural idioms of magic and millenialism. These were frequently bound up with an insurrectionist strand in rural ideology (similar to that already noted in the urban townships): Magade returned from a tour in the Transkei to report that the Gcalekas there said "that this IICU is too slow in taking action against these Europeans who are the exploiters and oppressors of the native sons of Africa. They say let us take a short way against them." (9.11.30) Violence was predicted, rather than preached: "I am telling you, there is a great trouble still coming,

something that would make the strike look small" (9.11.30) was a typical warning, which could take on strongly prophetic tones when rendered in rural idiom. Magade told an East London meeting "There is in Kentani district a crow which can speak and it tells the AmaXhosa to join the organisation, and it says there is a great war coming." (12.11.30)

Magical and millenial powers became attached, at rural meetings, to the physical emblems of IICU organisation, the yellow membership tickets. "The only way to protect the natives from that horrible trouble is to join the organisation and have a yellow ticket." Millenial currents had run deep and long in rural Xhosa ideology. Nonquase's prophecies had been central to the cattle-killing of 1857; Magade and others now invoked her memory in order to push the message of solidarity: "Nonquase - prophesied that the AmaXhosas should be united. Today we are carrying pick-axes, so as to dig out the Kaffir corn treasure ..." Magade may well have used the idiom of millenial deliverance in an instrumental manner, but their apocalyptic urgency and their reliance on deliverance by supernatural agency could at times subvert the IICU message of urban organisers. A graphic instance of this had occurred in Pondoland in 1928, where the name of the ICU had been absorbed into a millenialist movement demanding the killing of pigs and destruction of food as a protection against destruction by lightning. Magade at one point actually warned his audience against believing that "a fire will drop from heavens"; yet he himself was prepared to invoke supernatural vengeance on renegades; "I tell you that if you don't follow the prophecies of your ancestors ... then bad luck will fall on you."

The vocabulary of prophecy and millenialism may have been particularly audible at some of the prayer meetings and other gatherings largely attended by women in East London. (There is a good deal of evidence from other studies that women were attracted by independent Christian rhetoric and in some cases by its radical and millenialist urgings.) For the most part, the content of these meetings went unrecorded; the police were intent instead on following the activities of leading "agitators" and they attended mainly the more formal gatherings of the IICU. But in October 1930, presumably because Kadalie was also present, Constable Magamle went to "an IICU Church Service". His laconic account of the occasion provides a fascinating example of the kind of ideological juxtaposition and imbrication that could take place. After Kadalie's address, Selina Bungane, a woman of about forty, spoke. Magamle described her as coming

from a rural homestead in the Keiskammahoek district; she was then working as "a kitchen girl, at the Strand Hotel"; in the next breath he added "She is a member of the IICU and a prophetess." Bungane

> said she was a prophetess ... said she received a message from God that let all the natives listen to what Kadalie tells them. God has revealed to her that Kadalie is the only leader who is going to uplift Africa. She again has received a message from the Almighty God that Kadalie should go to Gcalekaland in the Transkei and organise the AmaXhosas at the Great Place of the Paramount Chief Ngangomhlaba. Again the natives should pick out a certain day every year to remind themselves of the public holiday of the late prophet Ntsikana. I want to tell you this: there are some dangerous locusts riding on the ass and they will bite all those people who refuse to accept Kadalie's teaching. (5.10.30)

Selina Bungane's speech is a complex but revealing fragment of consciousness. It is an admixture of concern for organisation, the language of separatist Christianity, prophetic folk culture, and an acceptance of traditional rural political authorities. The logical sequence of these elements, as well as their diversity, was part of what the IICU leadership had to respond to as it reached out to a rural base.

(6) RETROSPECT AND CONCLUSION

Pressure from the rank and file membership - urban and rural - on IICU rhetoric could work to define new issues, leading to their ventilation and their assimilation into the broad programme of the movement. Pressure from below could also manifest itself in messages far harder to incorporate in IICU policy and practices. Diffuse and contradictory ideological modes could not always be amalgamated; sometimes they scraped and jarred against one another. In many instances, the IICU was flexible enough to incorporate what Rudé has called "structured" or "derived" ideology (calls for union organisation or nation-building) with what he dubs traditional or "inherent" rural ideology (like the prophetic and supernatural elements of the folk culture).[31] At times, however, the blend failed; the penetration of inherent elements caused an ideological reaction.

The shifts in language and tactics were not always made easily or willingly by the leadership. This was true both in urban and rural contexts. Although the IICU's adoption of location grievances (especially brewing and lodgers permits) enabled it to mobilise popular support in mid-1930, by the end of that

year the union organisers were beginning to soft-pedal these issues. Indeed, by 1931 there are clear signs that at least some of the leaders were becoming impatient with demands being made on them in regard to township grievances. They were returning to the nationalist concerns and resorting to the highly generalised radical rhetoric of the pre-strike period. Siyo (who started sharing IICU platforms at the beginning of 1931) actually argued that the movement should drop township issues and pursue broader nationalist goals instead:

> Some say if IICU people are doing something right, they just first of all fight against the Kaffir Beer Act. The Police are arresting native females for brewing kaffir beer in the location. I myself say that if these non-IICU people wish that we should fight against the police who arrest native females for brewing kaffir beer they had better give up, because we will never do that .... You must come and join the union and leave those useless complaints which you have about your unhappy living in the location, for they will not build us as a nation .... I could tell you to do away with the kaffir beer if you want to be a free nation. (1/2/31)

Siyo was later accused of being an informer, and drummed out of the IICU; but the direction in which he was pointing on this issue was being followed by other speakers, including Kadalie. Organisers were arguing in 1931 that if brewers wanted long term action they should become union members, and they accused women of holding back the growth of the organisation.

When it came to negotiating on township issues, the IICU leaders generally sought compromise with municipal and government authorities. Thus, they backed off from the popular call for the abolition of lodgers' permits, accepting the police position and "therefore advis[ing] the native females to go to the Superintendent Location Office and get a lodger's permit." (3/8/30) Demands to employers for wages not paid while workers were on strike were (perhaps understandably) pursued in gingerly fashion. By the end of 1930, the IICU did not have a great deal to offer its urban members. Many who had paid their subscriptions to the union were becoming restless. Whereas the leadership had been able to justify the constant collections and cash demands in the months leading up to the strike, they were now less able to do so. They still held out promises of long term gains: the possibility of another, better organised, strike was floated; the claim was made that with black unity even the aeroplanes of the white man could be defeated. But these exhortations had become devalued amongst members who had lost their jobs, and who felt that they were being further oppressed by tougher police action on lodgers' permits and brewing.

It was in this context that the tensions between rank and file members and the leadership began to manifest themselves. Meetings in East London became the venue for angry exchanges between organisers and followers, not least the women members. Kadalie recounted a fraught confrontation with one Lydia: she had paid her membership dues, but now demanded "What is organisation?" and accused Kadalie and Mnika - "You stole the IICU money." (9/11/30 In 1931, such complaints were defined more precisely and pressed more regularly. Kadalie's drinking, the motor car bought for the committee, the instances of outright theft were all cited as abuses of rank and file subscriptions. Attendance at meetings began to fall off as the leaders began to fall out. Large crowds might still turn out when mobilised by particular events; in March 1931 6000 people attended an IICU meeting to protest against police brutality against a township woman; but the levels of mobilisation achieved in 1930 were increasingly difficult to maintain.

The strains apparent in the urban movement were mirrored in the IICU's rural branches. The push into rural areas - like the adoption of township issues - had had a contradictory impact on the organisation. It instilled a new vigour and dynamism in the IICU and broadened its appeal; it also opened new chasms between popular demands and the leadership's ability to satisfy them. In 1931, at the same time that the leaders ran into problems with their urban rank and file, accusations of waste and corruption began to punctuate reports of rural meetings. Chief Sigidi now advised his adherents to leave the IICU, saying that the money was being spent for the benefit of a few and reporting that the ordinary members in East London were disillusioned. In Mooiplaats, the IICU branch split into two factions; Mabodla, the Kentani organiser who had been dismissed for corruption, now set up a rival "National Union" which sought members largely in the rural districts around East London. The IICU did manage to sustain a dwindling rural presence for the next couple of years. But when Mnika (faced with the fall-off in urban enthusiasm) argued that "the leaders have finished preaching to the East London natives, but should now go out and preach to the natives in the countryside" (18/8/31) he was effectively too late.

Popular expectations, in short, had been raised; but such was the power of the state and employers that the union could do little to satisfy them. The leadership had responded to, and used, popular energies in expanding their

organisation; now they found that these same energies were causing internal tensions. It was one of the central conundrums facing the IICU leadership. In order to mobilise the people in East London and the countryside they had to move beyond wage demands and narrowly defined trade union concerns; in doing so, they promised more than they could deliver; thus they made the programme of the movement more fragile by adopting an immediatist popular perspective that virtually invited its own defeat.

The pattern of popular disaffection and leadership disputes became clear during 1931 and 1932. Kadalie attempted to shift the blame for financial mismanagement onto the East London IICU stalwarts, Magade and Mnika. An uneasy accommodation was reached between them, until in 1932 Kadalie again found himself facing legal costs and demanded more money, becoming increasingly arrogant in his approach. Magade, Mnika and Vandla finally broke with him; they went so far as to contact the police to request action against Kadalie. Kadalie tried to offset the defection of his lieutenants by maintaining popular support: he even arranged an attempted negotiation on beer brewing in April 1932 (although the Town Council remained obdurate). Kadalie succeeded in keeping the support of the women members, and his section was able to dominate the Sunday meetings throughout 1932. In June of that year a motion of No Confidence in Kadalie was passed at the IICU Eastern Cape conference; but the Eastern Cape leaders hesitated from dismissing him completely lest they lose the popular support that Kadalie still attracted. It was amidst infighting and wrangling that the IICU faded into insignificance in 1933. It is not enough, as several existing accounts do, to deplore or ridicule this denouement; to understand it, we are suggesting, it is necessary to comprehend something of the ideological and political contradictions which underlay the welter of factionalism and the accusations of corruption.

Two final conclusions may be drawn from the above analysis. The difficulties and demise of the IICU should not be allowed to obscure the nature of its achievement, nor its importance in the history of popular struggles in South Africa. Like the ICU in its heyday, the IICU between 1929 and 1932 spanned both urban and rural popular movements; organisationally, it served as a bridge

between variegated communities and provided leadership to inchoate and shifting underclass elements; ideologically, it incorporated many of the desires and demands of these classes. While the Rank and File Committee in East London was more militant than the formal leadership, and while it adopted tactics of civil disobedience (like the demonstration and demands for mass imprisonment) more venturesome than those of the Strike Committee, it is also clear that the rank and file movement sprang out of the mobilisation and organisation already achieved by the IICU. The task confronting the IICU - to provide political leadership for a constituency as socially diverse and culturally fragmented as that in the townships and rural areas - was immensely daunting. The partial and short-lived nature of its success looks all the more impressive if it is compared with the more limited achievements of other organisations in the 1920s, 1930s, and after.

Secondly, this study of the IICU in East London has (like other chapters in this book) demonstrated the resilience and autonomy of localised traditionalist or inherent ideologies of protest, especially but not uniquely in rural areas. The nature of much popular consciousness has not been fully recognised, let alone adequately analysed, in the reconstruction of South Africa's recent past. The essays in this book suggest the reality and the complexity of that consciousness - and also illustrate the political challenges that they posed to historical actors and nationalist organisers at the time.

In South Africa in the mid-1980s, black trade unionism, unemployment, police surveillance, and the problems of linking "insider" urban struggles with "outsider" rural struggles lie close to the heart of contemporary class conflict. The fifty year old documents on which this essay is based have something to say about these issues. They are part of an historical legacy of resistance, and the legacy has not been fully claimed. One ICU stalwart who clearly had a concept of a "usable past" was A.W.G. Champion. Addressing a meeting in East London on 12th December 1930 he said: "What I want you to do is to keep your native Cape history. It must be written and kept for future generations."

NOTES

1. CA, CMT, 1/KNT 40, file 12, report by Constable S. Mahla, 30 January 1930.
2. Quoted in D. G. Bettison, "A Socio-Economic Study of East London, with special reference to the Non-European Peoples" (M.A. thesis, Rhodes Univ., 1950), 88.
3. Daily Dispatch, 30 November 1929 and 9 December 1929.
4. T. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 (London, 1983), 56. See also Bettison, "A Socio-Economic Study of East London" and D. Reader, The Black Man's Portion (Cape Town, 1961). In 1925, the East London Natives Vigilance Association pointed out how important as a building material for township inhabitants were the packing cases originally used for housing imported motor cars: these were sold to township Africans for £1-15-0 each, and were much valued "for the purpose of flooring, ceiling, and lining our houses". (CA, 31ELN, box 2, petition of W.G. Khaka and others, Sept. 1925)
5. For some details of political activity in the East London townships prior to 1920, see Reader, Black Man's Portion, 11-14, and A. Odendaal, "African Political Mobilization in the Eastern Cape, 1880-1910",(D.Phil. thesis, Cambridge Univ., 1983), 120, 136, 199-200.
6. P. and I. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen, 2nd Ed., (Cape Town, 1971), 52.
7. Reader, Black Man's Portion, 16; there is considerable evidence in 3/ELN, box 2, of the clashes between Vigilance Association and Advisory Board during 1924 and 1925. In September 1924 the Vigilance Association called for the dismissal of the Board "as we have no more confidence in the majority of the Location Board".
8. Mayer, Townsmen or Tribesmen, 52.
9. Ibid.
10. These strikes are discussed in some detail in H.H. Smith, "Development of Labour Organization in East London, 1900-1948" (M.Econ. thesis, Rhodes Univ., 1949), 138-162.
11. M. Legassick, "Class and Nationalism in South African Protest: The SACP and the 'Native Republic', 1928-34" (Syracuse University, 1973), 7.
12. CA, CMT, 1/KNT, vol. 40, file 12, V. V. can Coller to CMT, 5 December 1927.

13. In the period November 1928 to February 1929, Wellington Buthelesi had about eight meetings in and nearby East London. At the first of these, he shared a platform with Mzaza of the ICU, but this association was not repeated. The self-styled "Doctor Wellington" had already attracted significant support in the Transkei with his United Negro Improvement Association and the creation of breakaway churches and schools. Promising deliverance at the hands of black Americans, Buthelezi attracted rural support with his anti-white stance and radical rhetoric. For an account of Buthelezi and the Wellington Movement, see R. Edgar, "Garveyism in Africa: Dr. Wellington and the 'American' movement in the Transkei", Collected Seminar Papers Southern African Societies Seminar, vol. 6 (London Univ., Inst. of Commonwealth Studies, 1976).

14. Report of the Medical Officer of Health, for the period 1 July 1930 to 30 June 1931, on the Public Health and Sanitary Circumstances of the City of East London, p. 52.

15. Ibid., p. 60.

16. P.L. Wickins, The Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of Africa (Cape Town, 1978), 197.

17. The phrase is from M. Hunter, Reaction to Conquest (2nd Ed., London, 1961), 569. Her account of the strike (568-70) is fuller and more sympathetic than Wickins'.

18. Ibid, 570.

19. CA, 1/ELN 86, 12/60/2, document no. EL 2/225/31, Resident Magistrate, East London, to Secretary, Natives Economic Commission, 16 February 1931.

20. Daily Dispatch, 28 January 1930 and 29 January 1930.

21. CA, 31ELN, vol. 3, the extract is from a report dated 27 February 1930. It is n clear who the author of the report is; but the document is stamped "Public Health Department", and it may have been the MOH.

22. Ibid.

23. C. Kadalie, My Life and the ICU (London, 1970), 194.

24. Ibid., 199.

25. Daily Dispatch, 19 February 1930.

26. Report of the MOH, 1930/31, 51.

27. CA, CMT, 1/KNT vol. 40, file 12, report 19 March 1930, encl. in Dep. Comm., SAP to CMT, 26 March 1930.

28. CA, CMT, 1/KNT, 40, file 12, F. Soga to W.I.C. Trollip (RN Kentani), 6 February 1930.

29. CA, CMT, 1/KNT, 40, file 12, report by Const. S. Mahla, 14 March 1930.

30. Ibid., report by Det/Sgt. j.c.c. Stoltz, 10 February 1930.

31. G. Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest (London, 1980), 28-33 & passim.

Note on Sources

This paper is based very largely upon a single archival source: the police reports collected in CA 1/ELN vols 86, file C3(1) and 87, file C3(2). These reports date from 1928 to 1933, and consist in the main of accounts by black and white policemen of meetings which they attended. The reports are usually headed "Native Agitation"; and include details of meetings organised by other individuals and groups (such as the Wellington Movement, the Cape ANC, etc.); but they are preponderantly concerned with ICU and IICU meetings held in and near East London.

The reports provide a record of organisational activity: each one records the date and venue of the meeting, the names of the speakers, and number of people attending them, and details of any actions undertaken (such as cash collections, votes, petitions, etc.). Moreover, the reports also contain a record of what was actually said: they are essential verbatim or précis accounts of speeches. In some cases, the policemen merely summarised the drift of an address ("The speaker then became abusive, and blamed Europeans for oppressing the natives") but more usually they attempted to record the main points and sequence of what was said.

There is no attempt at literary polish in the reports: much is garbled, ungrammatical and obviously shortened. At times, however, something is captured of the flow and imagery of men who were highly regarded as orators. Certainly, the reports enable the historian to discover what topics were discussed and with what frequency and to learn something of the idiom and vocabulary in which they were couched. We have not attempted to edit or improve the language of the reports (even when it plainly did little justice to the original speeches), other than adding some punctuation so as to aid reading, and correcting obvious spelling errors.

All documentary sources have their own limitations, lacunae, and biases; and the question of deliberate distortion has frequently been raised when we have presented some of this material in seminars or lectures. How trustworthy are the East London policemen in their accounts? Might they not have been trying to frame the IICU leaders? So far as we are able to judge, these are not serious problems in using this archival source. The intention of the police reports was to provide an accurate record of what was taking place, and not collecting evidence for use in court cases. In some cases, more than one report was filed, by different reporters,

for the same meetings: their content reveals a high degree of agreement on what was said. Even more convincing corroboration, we believe, comes from prolonged reading of the reports: their internal consistency is striking. Even through their unadorned prose it is possible to recognose the oratorical style of individual speakers; and in reports filed over many months it is possible to identify the way new topics are introduced, explored, and elaborated. It would not have been possible for any policemen then serving in the East London S.A.P. to have invented - and sustained - the changing content of these speeches.